BUDDHISM

THE MARXIST APPROACH

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

99/83.1

BUDDHISM

The Marxist Approach

By

Rahul Sankrityayan
Debiprosad Chattopadhyaya
Y. Balaramamoorty
Ram Bilas Sharma
Mulk Raj Anand

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE
New Delhi

First Edition : *January* 1970 (*P* 290)

Second Edition : September 1973

COPYRIGHT © 1970 BY PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE P LTD.
NEW DELHI 55

Price :
Rs. 6.00 (cloth)
Rs. 2.00 (paper)

Printed by Tarun Sengupta from New Age Printing Press, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110055, and published by him for People's Publishing House (P) Ltd., Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110055.

CONTENTS

BUDDHIST DIALECTICS
by Rahul Sankrityayan 1

SOME PROBLEMS OF EARLY BUDDHISM
by Debiprosad Chattopadhyaya 9

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY
by Y. Balaramamoorty 39

SOME ASPECTS OF THE TEACHING OF BUDDHA
by Ram Bilas Sharma 54

THE NATURE OF BUDDHIST ART
by Mulk Raj Anand 66

BUDDHIST DIALECTICS

Rahul Sankrityayan

In Buddhism there is no place either for god (creator of the universe) or for a revealed book. Morality is based on the act being good or bad. Those who believe in god subject morality also to the will of god—whatever is prescribed by god is good and whatever is prohibited by him is evil. Here buddhism differs, it considers the "good of many, happiness of many" (*bahujana hitaya bahujana sukhaya*) to be the criterion of good and evil.

Socioeconomic Views

In the economic and political fields also the views of Buddha are different. He had prescribed the ideal of service for the monks and nuns. He had called those who did not conform to this ideal as "useless consumers of the nation's wealth" (*moghaṃ su ratthapiṇḍaṃ bhuṃsati*). He enjoined upon them to adopt communal living. He had introduced the system of economic communism in the community of monks and nuns. Apart from the eight items (of personal use), such as

clothing, the begging bowl, etc., all other things were considered to be the property of the commune (samgha). The houses, gardens, small agricultural and other implements, bedsteads, beddings, etc. were all considered to be communal property.

In the days of Buddha whatever land was donated was given to the "present and future commune of the four directions" (*agata anagata chatudisasa samghasa*) alone. This system continued for four or five centuries. The inscriptions in Ceylon indicate that in the two centuries preceding Christ, fields were donated as charity only to the "present and future communes of the four directions". Of course, in the buddhist commune economic communism could not continue for long and in the 2nd century BC, according to the testimony of the inscriptions at Sanchi and Bharhut, the monks and nuns were already constructing pillars and railings with their private income, which meant that now they had other personal property apart from the eight items of personal use.

Buddha preferred the political system of the republics (ganas). In that age slavery was prevalent, and hence in the Lichhavi (Vaishali) republic, the most prosperous and powerful at the time, democracy existed only for those who belonged to the Lichhavi clan. The slaves were movable property and they were numerous. The non-Lichhavi brahmin or grahapati (trader) caste though free had no right of vote for the senate (samsad). They were at the mercy of the Lichhavis. All the same these republics were evidently better than monarchy.

For Buddha the origin of monarchy did not lie in any divine source but kingship was the product of the growth of private property. Private property led to inequality or class division among the people, who started quarrelling among themselves and (overtly or covertly) started trying to snatch each other's property, and therefore they selected one from among them as their judge, who by accumulating power for selfish ends developed into a king.

Buddha lived in the 6th-5th century BC (death 483 BC). At that time too economic and social discrimination was very sharp. For the eradication of economic inequality Buddha confined his efforts to the monastic communes alone, but the abolition of

social inequality he attempted on a universal scale. His voice raised against casteism had its effect but the basic foundation of casteism lay in the high-caste "haves" and the low-caste "have-nots". Without removing the one the other could not be done away with. All the same Buddha's communes granted equal rights in the monastic order to the lowest of the castes, the chandalas, who were accepted as human beings by courtesy only. Buddhism fervently advocated the brotherhood of man without any distinction of race, country or caste. The principle of coexistence embodied in the panch shila was put into practice by buddhism. And its missionaries in foreign lands never even dreamt of destroying the culture of any nation.

Buddhist Philosophy

Buddhism has made original contributions in several fields but those in the field of philosophy are unique. Of course, it will be erroneous to say that it helped Marx's philosophy or it ever came anywhere near the fundamentals of marxism. But an understanding of marxist philosophy is easier for students of buddhist philosophy.

We know that Hegel's philosophy played an important part in the development of marxist philosophy and marxist philosophy on its part removed the inconsistencies of hegelian philosophy. It is said that the reality put up-side-down in the form of hegelianism was put on its feet by Marx in the form of dialectical materialism. Hegel held that mind or idea was primary and real and matter a product thereof. Marx held matter to be primary and mind to be its highest development. Buddhism in its highest and final form is in a large measure similar to the idealism of Hegel. The idea (vijnana) of yogachara philosophy is dynamic and nonmaterial. Like Hegel, the yogachara school of buddhism too considers idea or mind as the ultimate reality.

The basic tenet of buddhism is: all is noneternal. Later on the word "momentary" came to be used for "noneternal" and it was said that whatever is "real" is "momentary" or "dynamic", and whatever is not "momentary" is not "real". Thus buddhist philosophy denied the existence of anything

"eternal" and "static" in the world. For buddhism this is the fundamental concept which has no exception. The denial of god or soul was a corollary of this principle. Buddhist philosopl y takes pride in its denial of the soul (anatmavada).

Buddha's birth synchronised with the end of the age of the upanishads. The sages (rishis) of the upanishads laid the greatest emphasis on the soul (individual or cosmic)—soul is something nonmaterial, eternal and unchangeable. Buddhism aimed primarily at shattering this eternalist philosophy of the upanishads, and that is why it was called anatmavada as against the atmavada of the upanishads.

The dynamism of buddhist philosophy, i.e., everything is in flux, inspired an entirely different outlook about the world. Even the believers in souls or eternalists were willing to accept the external world as changeable but they believed in an eternal existence within it. This they called atman or brahman. Buddhists say: if we look inside the trunk of a banana tree we would get only layers within layers, one covering peeling off after the other but no substance inside it, similarly all the things in the universe do not contain any eternal substance—atman or brahman; the world is void of any eternal element.

Hence the concept of buddhist voidism (shunyavada). To explain their concept of dynamism the example of clouds or the flame of the lamp is cited. Just as the clouds go on changing each moment, so does this world. Even the most solid diamond or iron goes on changing every moment. Then why the similarity and sameness in their *previous* and subsequent forms? To this the buddhist reply is: similarity in organisation. The effect is always similar to the cause, hence the illusion of oneness. The flame of the lamp is changing every moment but the new flame born out of the old flame is similar to it, therefore we rush to the conclusion that "it is the same flame".

Theory of Causality

Having accepted the entire inner and outer world, without any exception, as noneternal it was necessary to have a different theory of causality too. Those who held the atoms or matter to be like immutable bricks could assert that by the

assemblage of them the new object arises. Their integration and disintegration correspond to the origination and destruction of things. But buddhist philosophy did not believe in the existence of such immutable eternal bricks. Everything is void of eternal essence, i.e, there are not things (vastu) but events (dharma). They could not be compared to gold which is a primary element and can be moulded into different shapes, such as bracelets or pendants. Buddha used a different terminology to explain the law of causality: dependent origination (pratitya samutpada).

Elucidating this terminology Buddha says "When this was, then this comes and it was then this becomes" (*asmin sati idam bhavati*). At the completion of this, this is born. What has just ended is the cause and what has emerged after the cause is the effect. The effect was wholly nonexistent when the cause was there, and when the effect came into existence the cause completely vanished. There was no eternal substance inside the cause which is transferred to the effect. Actually they have no other relation to each other except that the one preceded or followed the other.

Collectivity of Causes

Having accepted the world in flux, as a conglomeration not of things but of events, the concept of dependent origination becomes inevitable. Dynamism and the theory that there is no eternal substratum forced them to look upon the world as made up of events. Rejection of the old ideas of the law of cause and effect inevitably led to the concept of dependent origination. In other words, dependent origination replaced the old theory of cause and effect.

Here buddhist philosophy shattered another old concept, according to which one cause was supposed to beget one or several effects. The sages of the upanishads believed in several strange things originating from the same soul (atman). Even in the material world one element was called the cause and the other element originating from it the effect. Buddhist philosophy contended that no object—or to use their nomenclature dharma—is born of one thing No effect has only one

cause, but several causes together give birth to one effect (object). This theory is called collecuvity of causes (hetu-samagrivada).

The great philosopher Dharmakirti says. "One (thing) is not born out of one but all is born of collective causes" (*na chaikam ekam ekasmat, samagrya sarva sambhavah*). When several causes assemble then one effect is created. Though the doctrine of the unity of the opposites is not mentioned as in marxist philosophy yet it is clearly stated that one effect is the result of the coming together of several causes and if the smallest of them is missing then that effect would not result. According buddhist philosophy cause is entirely different from effect, in other words, the emergence of the effect is a qualitative change. And this qualitative change (emergence of an entirely different effect) cannot take place unless all the causes are pooled in the required measure—quantity. This concept of cause and effect includes qualitative change (the effect) and quantity which brings this about (collectivity of causes).

Definition of Reality

In the light of this conception of the world the buddhist thinkers had to define anew what is "real" and what is "unreal". For the ancient thinkers this definition was simple enough: that which is eternal, immutable or unchangeable is real and that which is noneternal, mutable or changeable is unreal. In buddhism there was no place for such "real" things. They defined a real thing as: that which is capable of objective action (artha-kriya-samartham).

Sweets and bread are real because they are capable of objective action, i e, they are capable of the objective action of nourishment or satisfying our hunger, but the sweets and bread seen in a dream are not real because they cannot satisfy our hunger, they are incapable of objective action. That which is capable of objective action has been called not only real but absolutely real (paramartha sat). What was real according to the ancient thinkers was not capable of objective action because it was immutable, eternal and perfect. What is the proof of

the existence of an inactive thing which is beyond the reach of the senses, since it is not an object of direct perception or of inference based on it?

The criterion of being objectively active is an infallible test of reality, and there is no doubt that in it one gets an inkling of modern ideas. The real should prove itself by objective experiment, nothing can be called real just on the basis of reason. To the rationalist objection that his stand was not rational, Dharmakirti replied: "If the objects themselves are like that, who are we?" (*yadidam svayamarthanam rocate tatra ke vayam*). Reason is not absolute, only the objective action or experiment is the touchstone of reality. This was a big weapon but it was not used, and there was reason for it. The entire progress of science is based on this principle—that we accept objects as our guide.

Matter and Mind

In buddhist philosophy there are differences regarding the ideas about body and mind, matter and mind. Monist idealists among buddhists consider only the mind to be real. Of course, even this "real" (mind) of theirs is dynamic. The others, the dualists, accept the separate existence of matter and mind. But this much both accept that the mind depends on the body (kaya sthitam manah). Mind or consciousness or idea cannot exist apart from the body or matter. This sentence reveals to some extent the mutual relationship between mind and matter, i.e., mind is dependent on matter (body).

Even the dualists did not accept that mind is absolutely different from matter. They said that like water and the waves, the world of matter is a transmutation (parinama) of mind. This is akin to hegelian philosophy. If instead of "matter is a transmutation of mind" (vijnana parinamosan) it is said that mind is evolution of matter (rupa parinamashchit), then buddhist idealism will be spared the trouble of standing on its head.

And in their philosophy there was enough ground for thinking in this manner. When every effect is entirely different and qualitatively entirely new as compared to the causes then what

cause, but several causes together give birth to one effect (object). This theory is called collecuvity of causes (hetu-samagrivada).

The great philosopher Dharmakirti says. "One (thing) is not born out of one but all is born of collective causes" (*na chaikam ekam ekasmat, samagrya sarva sambhavah*). When several causes assemble then one effect is created. Though the doctrine of the unity of the opposites is not mentioned as in marxist philosophy yet it is clearly stated that one effect is the result of the coming together of several causes and if the smallest of them is missing then that effect would not result. According to buddhist philosophy cause is entirely different from effect, in other words, the emergence of the effect is a qualitative change. And this qualitative change (emergence of an entirely different effect) cannot take place unless all the causes are pooled in the required measure—quantity. This concept of cause and effect includes qualitative change (the effect) and quantity which brings this about (collectivity of causes).

Definition of Reality

In the light of this conception of the world the buddhist thinkers had to define anew what is "real" and what is "unreal". For the ancient thinkers this definition was simple enough: that which is eternal, immutable or unchangeable is real and that which is noneternal, mutable or changeable is unreal In buddhism there was no place for such "real" things. They defined a real thing as· that which is capable of objective action (artha-kriya-samartham).

Sweets and bread are real because they are capable of objective action, i e., they are capable of the objective action of nourishment or satisfying our hunger, but the sweets and bread seen in a dream are not real because they cannot satisfy our hunger, they are incapable of objective action. That which is capable of objective action has been called not only real but absolutely real (paramartha sat). What was real according to the ancient thinkers was not capable of objective action because it was immutable, eternal and perfect. What is the proof of

the existence of an inactive thing which is beyond the reach of the senses, since it is not an object of direct perception or of inference based on it?

The criterion of being objectively active is an infallible test of reality, and there is no doubt that in it one gets an inkling of modern ideas. The real should prove itself by objective experiment, nothing can be called real just on the basis of reason. To the rationalist objection that his stand was not rational, Dharmakirti replied: "If the objects themselves are like that, who are we?" (*yadidam svayamarthanam rocate tatra ke vayam*). Reason is not absolute, only the objective action or experiment is the touchstone of reality. This was a big weapon but it was not used, and there was reason for it. The entire progress of science is based on this principle—that we accept objects as our guide.

Matter and Mind

In buddhist philosophy there are differences regarding the ideas about body and mind, matter and mind. Monist idealists among buddhists consider only the mind to be real. Of course, even this "real" (mind) of theirs is dynamic. The others, the dualists, accept the separate existence of matter and mind. But this much both accept that the mind depends on the body (kaya sthitam manah). Mind or consciousness or idea cannot exist apart from the body or matter. This sentence reveals to some extent the mutual relationship between mind and matter, i.e., mind is dependent on matter (body).

Even the dualists did not accept that mind is absolutely different from matter. They said that like water and the waves, the world of matter is a transmutation (parinama) of mind. This is akin to hegelian philosophy. If instead of "matter is a transmutation of mind" (vijnana parinamosan) it is said that mind is evolution of matter (rupa parinamashchit), then buddhist idealism will be spared the trouble of standing on its head.

And in their philosophy there was enough ground for thinking in this manner When every effect is entirely different and qualitatively entirely new as compared to the causes then what

difficulty was there in accepting that mind evolves from matter—mind while being entirely different from matter could still be its effect. Dialectical materialism even while asserting that mind has evolved out of matter does not contend that mind is matter, on the contrary it considers mind to be different from it and its highest evolution.

In Buddha's time, on the one hand, there were the atmavadi thinkers who considered the soul to be eternal and immutable. On the other hand, there were materialist thinkers too who denied the existence of the soul, although their materialism had not risen above the level of mechanical materialism. Buddha and his followers propounded a philosophy which includes several features of advanced materialism but they were not prepared to call themselves materialists.

The buddhist thinkers had from the very beginning been insistent on adopting the middle path in all matters; and here too they wanted to keep themselves between theism and materialism, although with regard to noneternalism they did not advocate the middle path. For this consideration alone buddhism is accepted as a religion. In spite of such radicalism in their philosophy, their belief in rebirth, yogic mysticism and some other views are the same as in other religions. That buddhist thought made violent attacks against many an established tenet is proved by this saying of India's unparalleled philosopher Dharmakirti. *Vedapramanyam kasyacit kartrivadah snane dharmechha jativadavalepah. Santaparamth papahanaya ceti dhvastapramanam panca lingani jadye.*

"Accepting the authority of the Veda and someone as the creator, the desire of getting merit through the holy dip, the vanity of casteism and torturing the body to redeem the sins—these are the five characteristics of stupidity."

SOME PROBLEMS OF EARLY BUDDHISM

Debiprosad Chattopadhyaya

MODERN WRITERS ON EARLY buddhism, and among them are included scholars of such eminence that their authority cannot be easily questioned, have arrived at the most extraordinarily contradictory conclusions regarding the question of its class affiliation. Gautama, it is maintained by some, was the champion of the oppressed; others "disparage him for neglecting the humble and the wretched" and for aligning himself with the noble and the rich.

Our purpose here is to suggest that such contradictions are largely the result of an unfortunate situation, namely, that the modern writers on early buddhism often work with an inadequate understanding of ancient society in general. Morgan's works are not taken note of and the concept of primitive communism remains unknown or unacknowledged. Our argument, therefore, is that new light can probably be thrown on ancient data if our scholars agree to work on the basis of a better understanding of ancient society. It will mean the revision of the

traditional methodology. We shall be able to refer to it only in very broad outline. This may appear to be somewhat sketchy and even an oversimplification. But our purpose is not to arrive at any rigid conclusion regarding the problem of early buddhism; it is rather to define the problem and to suggest the possibilities of a new approach.

Political Reformer

The contradictory conclusions of the modern scholars may be mentioned first.

Some of them "ascribe to Gautama the role of a successful political reformer, by representing him as having fought for the poor and despised against the rich and privileged classes and as having gone far to abolish castes". Evidences like the following may be mentioned for this view.

"As the great streams", the sacred books of buddhism put in the mouth of the exalted one, "O disciples, however many they be, the Ganga, Yamuna, Aciravati, Sarabhu, Mahi, when they reach the great ocean, lose their old name and their old descent, and bear the only name, 'the great ocean', so also my disciples, these four castes, nobles, brahmanas, vaisyas, sudras, when they, in accordance with the law and doctrine which the order has preached, forsake their home and go into homelessness, lose their own name and their old paternity, and bear only one designation, 'ascetics', who follow the son of the Sakya house."

The sacred books of buddhism report a conversation between King Ajatasatru and the Buddha which suggests that before the yellow robe of the order kings and slaves were equal. Gautama asked Ajatasatru: "If a slave or a servant of the king puts on the yellow garment, and lives as a monk without reproach in thought, word and deed, wouldst thou then say, 'Well, then, let this man still be my slave and servant, to stand in my presence, bow before me, take upon himself to perform my behests, live to minister to my enjoyments, speak deferentially, hang upon my word.'" The king answered, "No, sire, I should bow before him, invite him to sit down, give him what he needed in the way of clothing, food, shelter and of

medicine, when he is ill, and I should assure him of protection, watch and ward, as is becoming."

The Buddha, it is recorded, addressed himself to "the welfare of many people, to the blessing, welfare and joy of gods and men". That explains why we hear of so many people of "mean origin" occupying important places in the buddhistic order. Upali, referred to as the chief authority after Gautama himself, was formerly only a barber. Sunita was a pukkusa. Sati was of the sons of the fisherfolk and Nanda a cowherd. The two Panthakas were born of the union of a slave with a woman of high caste. Capa was born of a deer-stalker. Punna and Punnika were slave girls. Sumangalamata was daughter and wife to the mat-weavers and Subha was the daughter of a smith. These are examples cited by Rhys Davids and he says that many more could be added to the list. According to him, "the percentage of lowborn members of the order was probably a fair proportion to the percentage of persons belonging to the despised jatis and sippas as compared with the rest of the population. Thus of the theris mentioned in the terigatha we know the social position of sixty, of whom five are mentioned above—that is, 8½ per cent of the whole order were base-born. It is likely that this is just about the proportion which persons in similar social rank bore to the rest of the population."

On the basis of evidence like these, Rhys Davids concludes that "as regards his own order, over which alone he had complete control, he ignores completely and absolutely all advantages or disabilities arising from birth, occupation and social status, and sweeps away all barriers and disabilities arising from the arbitrary rules of mere ceremonial or social impurity."

Contrary View

This is one way in which some of the competent scholars have looked at early buddhism. Others try to disprove it emphatically. "If any one", writes Oldenberg, "speaks of a democratic element in buddhism, he must bear in mind that the conception of any reformation of national life, every notion in any way based on the foundation of an ideal earthly kingdom,

of a religious utopia, was quite foreign to this fraternity. There was nothing resembling a social upheaval in India. Buddha's spirit was a stranger to that enthusiasm, without which no one can pose as the champion of the oppressed against the oppressor. Let the state and society remain what they are, the religious man, who as a monk has renounced the world, has no part in its care and occupations. Caste has no value for him, for everything earthly has ceased to affect his interests, but it never occurs to him to exercise his influence for its abolition or for the mitigation of the severity of its rules for those who have lagged behind in wordly surroundings."

Evidences like the following may be advanced in favour of this view.

Most of the leaders of this order were drawn from the ranks of the respectable and well-to-do. As Oldenberg shows, Tapussa and Bhallika, the "first persons in the world who made their profession of the faith", were merchants. Then, after the sermon at Benares, the "number of believers soon increases. The next convert is Yasa, a scion of a wealthy house at Benares, his parents and his wife likewise hear Buddha's discourses and become adherents of the faith as a lay-brother and lay-sister. Numerous friends of Yasa, youths of the most prominent houses in Benares and the country round about, adopt the monastic life." Then, at Uruvela, miracles after miracles (beginning with the miracle of overcoming a certain serpent-king) performed by the Buddha won over one thousand brahmins of the Kassapa family.

"All narratives of conversion in the buddhist scriptures", says Oldenberg, "resemble this narrative more or less." From Uruvela the Buddha travelled to Rajagriha, where King Bimbisara, "surrounded by twelve myriads of brahmins and citizens of Magadha", listens to the Buddha and "declares himself a lay convert of the buddhist church." Tradition claims that it is here at Rajagriha that Sariputta and Moggallana, sons of a brahmin family and formerly pupils of Sanjaya, took to the yellow robe. These are some of the specimens of the early converts and they were all merchants, kings or brahmins.

To this may be contrasted what Odenberg quotes as illustrating the attitude of the "gossiping populace of the streets of the

capital" of the Magadha territory: "At this time many distinguished and noble youths of the Magadha territory joined themselves to Buddha, to lead a pure life" On this the populace became displeased, and murmured, and were angry, saying, "the ascetic Gautama is come to bring childlessness: the ascetic Gautama is come to bring widowhood. the ascetic Gautama is come to bring subversion of families, etc. etc." This is surely not the way in which the people talk about the leader of a popular upsurge.

Further, the huge donations that came to Gautama from the nobles and merchants are mentioned to show that his real affiliations were not with the poor and the oppressed classes. Veluvana, once a pleasure-garden of the king, was given as gift by Bimbisara to the Buddha. Anathapindika, a merchant of fabulous wealth, made a gift of the Jetavana (near Savatthi) to the Buddha. And it was a costly gift. "It is narrated how Anathapindika was in search of a spot which should be worthy to serve as a place of sojourn for Buddha and his disciples, the garden of the prince Jeta alone appeared to him to unite in itself all requirements, but the prince declined to sell it to him. After protracted negotiations, Anathapindika obtained the garden for as much gold as sufficed to cover the surface of the ground of the whole Jetavana. He gave it to Buddha whose favourite place of sojourn it thenceforward was."

To all these is added the evidence of a number of rules "laid down to regulate admission to the buddhist order, in such wise that the existing rights of third parties should not be encroached upon". There is a rule, for example, laid down in the Vinaya texts that no runaway slave should be admitted into the order. In fact, one of the questions put to the candidate before his admission into the order was: "Are you a free man?" Similarly, soldiers who had deserted the army of the kings could not be admitted into the Samgha. Laws like these apparently implied that Buddha would not have gone a long way against the vested interests.

These are the two main ways in which our modern scholars have tried to assess the class affiliation of early buddhism. We may, probably without any great difficulty, collect much more evidence to strengthen the first view and argue against the

second to show how largely it depends on a misunderstanding of the data on which it is built up. However we shall avoid that procedure because it leaves the much more fundamental questions unanswered.

Two Questions

Buddha was not living in the modern world and as such his class affiliation cannot be judged by our contemporary standards. Thus, it will not be possible for us to judge whether early buddhism was democratic in character, unless we face two further questions. First, what exactly was the form in which democracy was known to the ancient world? Second, what was Buddha's attitude to such democracy, or, how far did early buddhism consciously affiliate itself to it?

We would try to answer the first question as follows: the only form of democracy known to the ancient world was the so-called tribal democracy. The qualification "so-called" is added because historically democracy is known to us to be a form of the state, and the state is an organ for the forcible repression of one class by another. Tribal society, on the other hand, is a preclass society, the state being alien to it. Its constitution is therefore known as primitive communism.

Thanks mainly to the monumental researches of Morgan we have now the knowledge, in the form of a general historical law, of how, as a consequence of the development of productive technique, the primitive preclass society disintegrates and the state emerges on its ruins. He also shows how the principles that govern this primitive preclass society appear to us to be ultrademocratic in character. Only this kind of democracy could have been known to Buddha.

Our answer to the second question is that Buddha not only looked at such communistic societies as the basic source of his inspiration, but he also consciously tried to model his own organisation in its pattern. But if we infer from this that Buddha was a communist, we shall be committing the same mistake which we are trying to criticise—the attempt to discover modern content in ancient historical contexts. Primitive communism or preclass society is not the same as communism

or classless society. The two are qualitatively different. The former was the source of inspiration of early buddhism and that explains its limitations as well as its grandeur.

The limitations are obvious. Rather than effecting a real social revolution, buddhism eventually passed into its opposite, became a state religion and served the people as a palliative for the very iniquities which it originally wanted to fight. At the same time we must not ignore its grandeur. Because Buddha was drawing so much from preclass society, buddhism, at least in its early phase, both in organisation and in ideology, was remarkably free from the characteristic illusions of class society in general.

Attitude to Tribal Societies

For convenience in discussion, we shall begin with the second question, namely, Buddha's attitude to the tribal societies he saw around him. The opening portions of the *Mahaparinibbana-Sutta* of Digha Nikaya give us the clue to it.

Ajatasatru, the king of Magadha, had made up his mind to attack and destroy the tribal people called the Vajjians. He sent his prime minister, the brahmin Vassakara, the rain-maker, to Buddha and to listen to the prediction of the exalted one. The prime minister went to Buddha and delivered to him the king's message. At that time the venerable Ananda was standing behind the exalted one and fanning him. Buddha listened to the prime minister but, significantly, did not answer him. Instead of that he addressed himself to Ananda and said.

"Have you heard, Ananda, that the Vajjians foregather often, and frequent the public meetings of their class?"

"Lord, I have heard", replied Ananda.

"So long, Ananda", rejoined the blessed one, "as the Vajjians foregather thus often, and frequent the public meetings of their clan, so long may they be expected not to decline but to prosper."

(And in the like manner questioning Ananda, and receiving a similar reply, the exalted one declared as follows the other conditions which would ensure the welfare of the Vajjian confederacy)

"So long, Ananda, as the Vajjians meet together in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out their undertakings in concord...so long may the Vajjians be expected not to decline, but to prosper."

(The Buddha mentioned seven conditions of the welfare of a tribe.)

Then the exalted one addressed Vassakara, the brahmin, and said.

"When I was once staying, O brahmin, at Vesali at the Sarandadavihara, I taught the Vajjians these conditions of welfare; and so long as these conditions shall continue to exist among the Vajjians...so long may we expect them not to decline, but to prosper."

The brahmin said, "...so, Gautama, the Vajjians cannot be overcome by the king of Magadha, that is not in battle, without diplomacy or breaking up their alliance And now, Gautama, we must go, we are busy and have much to do."

"Whatever you think most fitting, O brahmin", was the reply. And the brahmin Vassakara, the rain-maker...rose from his seat and went away.

Now, soon after he had gone the exalted one addressed the venerable Ananda and said: "Go now, Ananda, and assemble in the service hall such of the brethren as live in the neighbourhood of Rajagriha."

And he did so...

And the exalted one arose and went to the service hall, and when he was seated, he addressed the brethren and said,

"I will teach you, O mendicants, seven conditions of the welfare of a community. Listen well and attend, and I will speak..."

"So long, O mendicants, as the brethren foregather often, and frequent the formal meetings of their order, so long as they meet together in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out in concord the duties of the order...so long may the brethren be expected not to decline but to prosper..." (The Buddha mentioned the same seven conditions for the welfare of his order)

There is of course an obvious anachronism involved in the passage. The sacred text of buddhism, in its enthusiasm to

exaggerate the glory of the exalted one, puts into the mouth of Buddha the absurd claim that it was he who taught the tribal people that the real vitality of the tribal society is derived from its group life. "I taught the Vajjians those conditions of welfare", etc. This claim is an absurd one, because historically the group life of the tribal organisations must have been anterior to the birth of buddhism. The sacred text, thus, is reflecting a reality but reflecting it in an inverted manner

So we take the passage quoted to mean that in those days and in these parts of India which witnessed the birth of buddhism, there still survived powerful tribal societies, their power being ultimately derived from the group life characteristic of them. And, while representatives of early despotism like the King Ajatasatru were contemplating offensives against such tribes and were even seeking Gautama's grace for the purpose, Gautama himself was trying to draw his inspiration from these tribal organisations or primitive communistic societies and advising the brethren of his order to mould their lives according to the basic principles of the threatened democracies.

It is necessary to dispel a doubt caused by some of the modern historians concerning the identity of these tribal organisations. That will also answer the first of the two questions with which we proposed to begin: in what form could democratic organisation have been known to Buddha?

What Is Gana

Buddha was born in the Sakya gana, the independence of which is said to have been destroyed by the king of Kosala during the Buddha's life-time. The question is: what did the ancients mean by the word gana or by such wellknown synonyms of it as vrata, puga, samgha and sreni? Rhys Davids renders "Sakya gana" as simply the "Sakya clan", and he gathers such information about it as strongly reminds us of Morgan's general description of the tribal organisation. "The administrative and judicial business of the clan was carried out in public assembly, at which young and old were alike present, in their common mote hall (santhagara) at Kapilvastu...

A single chief—how and for what period chosen, we do not know—was elected as office holder, presiding over the session and, if no sessions were sitting, over the state. He bore the title of raja, which must have meant something like the Roman consul, or the Greek archon. We hear nowhere...of such acts of kingly sovereignty as are ascribed to the real kings."

A greater fidelity to the general laws of historical development would have made the scholar hesitate to use the word "state" in connection with his description of the clan organisation, for the former, as we have already said, emerges only on the ruins of the latter. However, our present concern is the meaning of the gana organisation, so many examples of which are mentioned in early buddhist literature.

Dr Fleet, supported by no less a scholar than R. C. Bhandarkar, coming across the word gana in other contexts, interprets it to mean simply "the tribe". Monier Williams, too, mentions "tribe" as one of the meanings of the word. However, F. W. Thomas and K. P. Jayaswal energetically oppose this interpretation. We shall specially refer to the view of Jayaswal who insists that the word means republican state, because this view has created considerable havoc in our academic circles. "In view of the results of a special study of the republican organisation", writes Jayaswal, "I differ from that great scholar (Rhys Davids) when he calls them 'clans'. The evidence does not warrant our calling them clans. Indian republics of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, as we shall see in sequence, had long passed the tribal stages of society. They were states, ganas and samghas, though many of them very likely had a tribal basis, as every state, ancient or modern, must have."

It will, of course, not be possible for us here to go into the question in any great detail. I had to do it elsewhere, in connection with my studies in the sources of the lokayata philosophy. And I saw how overwhelmingly strong are the evidences that support the view of Rhys Davids, Bhandarkar and Fleet, though, unfortunately, even these scholars have not seriously asked themselves what specifically is meant by "tribal society" and how exactly does it differ from the state. Owing largely to their neglect of Morgan the statements they make are in-

sufficiently clear. For the present let us see how Jayaswal proposes to bear the burden of proof on the other side. We shall confine ourselves to a typical example of "the special study of the republican organisations" on the basis of which he feels obliged to differ from Rhys Davids.

The Mahabharata mentions seven ganas which went by the name of Utsava-sanketa. The traditional commentator Nilakantha furnishes us with the following further information about them: "Among the people called by the name Utsava-sanketa mutual attachment between the males and the females is sufficient for the purpose of establishing sexual engagement (sanketa); marriage system does not exist among them, their sexual life is indiscriminate as among the beasts." Presumably, the reference is to a stage of social organisation which is anterior to the origin of the family, and therefore also to that of private property and the state; because the birth of these three are interlinked.

But Jayaswal, without any hint of any further evidence whatsoever, argues: "The Utsava-sanketas were republicans, probably founded by two men, Utsava and Sanketa. We may however point out that sanketa is a technical term denoting an act or resolution passed by a republic and it is just possible that sanketa has originally denoted a state formed by a resolution of the Utsavas." Apart from the invention of the meaning of the word sanketa which we do not come across in any standard lexicons, ancient or modern, we are bewildered as to how the second part of the statement can have any consistency with the first part. However, this is typical of Jayaswal's argument in defence of his discovery of so many republican states in ancient India, including his socalled republican state of the Vajjians which we have already referred to. Whatever it be, this is not the way of writing history.

Source of Buddhist Ideals

The evidence of the ganas is crucial. Buddhist sources mention the existence of so many ganas during Buddha's time. If by gana is meant the tribal society (or at least strong relics of such society) and if the organisation of such societies up

to the period of its disintegration (i.e. up to the period of the middle stage of barbarism) is known as primitive communism, then we are led by the buddhist records to view buddhist India as containing considerable patches of primitive communism.

Let us be quite clear on this point. It does not at all mean that India during Buddha's time was at the stage of primitive communism. Rather, it only means *the law of uneven development.*

State power was not unknown to India before Buddha's time. We know how the Indus valley witnessed it at least two or three thousand years before the birth of Buddha. But India is not a small country and, because of the law of uneven development, changes did not take place throughout India at the same pace and in the same pattern. Tribal patches are not extinct in India even today. That explains why the Imperial Gazetteer of India of 1881 is justified in referring to "the fragments of a prehistoric world still scattered over India", or, of "the remnants to our own day of the Stone Age". During the sixth century BC, such patches must have been more extensive. And in those days the tribal societies must have retained a purer form because traders and missionaries and the labour-recruiting agents were yet to penetrate these areas in sufficiently large numbers as in later times.

What was true of the ancient Indus valley was not bound to be true of the ancient Ganga valley, where buddhism arose. This does not mean that kingly power and the state machinery were unknown to the northeast India in Buddha's time. "There had been kings in the valley of the Ganga for centuries, long before buddhism, and the time was fast approaching when the whole of India would be under the sway of monarchical governments." This is true. It is also true that, mainly on the evidence of the Jatakas, we can infer a fairly high level of commodity production as witnessed by extensive trade and even the introduction of metal money. We hear of fabulous wealth being amassed by the merchants, we come across descriptions of huge caravans of the traders journeying to the other end of the country and we are told of the use of "kahapana, a square copper coin weighing about 146 grains,

and guaranteed as to weight and fineness by punch marks made by private individuals".

Such features must have carried some form of slavery at their heels and the Jatakas abound in references to them. If we do not mention these points elaborately, it is simply because the most outstanding buddhist scholars like Rhys Davids and Fick have already gone sufficiently deep into the details of all these (though, probably, our historians have yet to work out more completely the problem of the role of the merchant class vis-a-vis the landed aristocracy in buddhist India, for that alone will throw adequate light on the affiliation of the early merchants to the democratic revolution in the buddhist sense).

All these are true no doubt. However, what we are trying to argue is that these cannot be the whole of the truth about buddhist India unless we add that, as far as we can judge from the buddhist and other records, there were also considerable areas under primitive communism And, we repeat, there is nothing much to wonder about it, because it was the effect of the law of uneven development. And, if we dwell here too exclusively on this feature, the explanation is that it is so far almost totally ignored by our historians. Yet its importance is there. For we cannot understand early buddhism without understanding how Buddha is consciously gathering his inspiration from such communistic societies.

The reference to so many ganas during Buddha's time shows how he was surrounded by primitive communistic societies, or at least very strong relics of such societies. What is more remarkable about the early buddhist tradition is that the fact probably lingered in its memory as to how class-divided society with monarchical power, emerged on the ruins of an egalitarian society, and further how the growth of private property, consequent on the discovery of agriculture, was at the root of this great change We come across this memory in a remarkable passage of the *Mahavastu-avadana*

We will not have the space here to dwell on the characteristic tribal cosmogony with which the story, as told by the *Mahavastu-avadana*, is mixed up, it is necessary for our argument to concentrate only on the basic content. By broadly

following H P. Sastri's presentation of the story we can sum it up as follows.

In the beginning people used to feed on love and live in abodes which were bliss. Feeding on food which was love and living in abodes which were bliss, they lived thus. And whatever they did was dharma. Then emerged the distinction of varna (colour): some had good varna, some bad. And those who had good varna despised those who had bad. Vanity was born and with its birth died dharma. And with it dried up the love and honey on which they were so long feeding. They went on in search of new sources of food. They discovered the mushrooms and after that the herbs Then they discovered a variety of rice-grains called sali-dhana. Nobody then had any idea of hoarding the rice But the idea of hoarding eventually grew in their minds And the greed for hoarding went on increasing Along with it was born the consciousness of the difference between the sexes. To begin with, the idea of pairing appeared to them to be outrageous Eventually, however, the custom of pairing was stabilised and accepted And domestic affairs became the concern of the women.

In the meantime the greed for hoarding swelled so much that it not only demanded the technique of cultivation of land but further made the collective ownership of land impossible. Land had to be distributed for individual cultivation. Boundaries had to be determined for the cultivable land of each And it was decided that nobody should infringe the other's boundary. The arrangement continued for some time.

Later, new complications started to develop Someone thought "Well, this is my land and this the quantity of harvest that I reap But supposing there is a bad crop?" So he resolved: "Whether it is allowed or not does not matter, I will collect the grains from someone else's field" He stole and was caught by a third person The third person gave him a thrashing and called him a thief. He, the thief, cried "Look brothers, I am being beaten. Look brothers, I am being beaten. This is injustice. This is injustice."

And thus was born theft, untruth and punishment.

Then everybody assembled together and resolved Let us elect someone from among ourselves to look after the

border of each field. He will be strong and intelligent and obliging to all. Each of us shall pay him, by way of his remuneration, a part of our own produce. He will punish the criminal, he will protect the righteous and look after the just share of each.

They elected one from among themselves and agreed to pay him the sixth portion of their own crop. On the consent of all he became a raja. That is why the raja is called the mahasammata, or, the great consent.

H. P. Sastri rightly points out that in spite of the later distortions introduced into the story, its archaic essence can be unmistakably recovered. It is this essence which we have presented above. And this story is without parallel in ancient Indian literature outside buddhism. It is pointed out that certain Mahabharata passages, too, are found to retain the memory of the transition from the preclass to the class-divided society. That is true. However, what deserves our special attention in the buddhistic version is that god, or the creator, is conspicuously absent from the whole story. An attitude of stark materialism—though a primitive and naive one—pervades the whole story. Nothing is mentioned in it which can be called supernatural. Further, as H. P. Sastri very correctly insists upon, the story betrays a rather scanty respect for the emergent kingly power. That is characteristic of the buddhist tradition. Buddhism has this unique feature, says H. P. Sastri, that it never viewed the king as an incarnation of god. In this connection Sastri shows how Chandrakirtti, in the 5th century AD, speaks of the king as but a servant of the people (ganadasa): "Thou art only the servant of the people and thy salary is there in the form of the sixth part of the harvest Thou must not be vain."

Monarchical Despotism

To recapitulate: buddhist India contained considerable patches where primitive communism or its strong relics still survived and Buddha himself inherited the tradition of "liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gens". Further, the emergence of the state power on the ruins of an egalitarian

society formed part of the living memory of the buddhist tradition and it refused to look at the kingly power with any great respect.

This is one side of the picture. Let us now pass on to the other side, namely the attitude of the rising power of despotism towards the tribal societies that were then surviving.

We have already seen how, though the Buddha refused to grace King Ajatasatru's campaign against the Vajjians, the king himself was quite determined: "I will strike at the Vajjians, mighty and powerful though they be. I will root out these Vajjians, I will destroy these Vajjians, I will bring these Vajjians to utter ruin." But why was the king so very determined? The answer is to be found in Kautilya's work, he shows that it was the characteristic policy of these early monarchs to plunder the tribal people.

There is no ambiguity in Kautilya's statement of the policy, the essence of which is summed up by R. C. Majumdar as follows:

His (Kautilya's) political insight could not fail to grasp the cardinal fact that was hinted by Gautama Buddha, viz., "that the essence of the strength of a corporation lies in the unity among its members" and all his practical statemanship, and the truly remarkable power of inventing ingenious devices, was employed for the one end of sowing dissensions among those corporations. Thus he lays down the cardinal doctrine that "spies, gaining access to all these corporations, and finding out jealousy, hatred and other causes of quarrel among them, should sow the seeds of a well-planned dissension among them'. The spies employed and the ways and means adopted by them, were to be of various kinds... The brahmin minister of Chandragupta did not hesitate to recommend the free use of wine and women to achieve his purpose. Thus, "on occasions of any affray spies under the guise of vintners should, under the plea of the birth of a son, of marriage or of the death of a man, distribute as toast hundreds of vessels of liquor adulterated with the juice of 'madana' plant. Women endowed with bewitching youth and beauty may be exhibited to excite love in the minds of chief of corporations, and declare, 'Thus has he been killed in consequence of his love.'" Pretending that an-

other person has violently carried her off, they may bring about quarrel among those who love that woman, in the ensuing affray the fiery spies may kill one of them and declare, "Thus has he been killed in consequence of his love." I pass by the other devices which are suggested to achieve a man's ruin by alluring him with feminine beauty..

We do not really know who this Kautilya was. On the basis of the usual assumption that he was the brain behind the Maurya empire, we may place him roughly a couple of centuries after the Buddha. However, on the basis of certain Mahabharata references we may judge that the policy so sharply formulated by him was in fact the policy actively followed by the early monarchs with respect to the tribal societies long ago. And the stark unscrupulousness of Kautilya's policy is not to be wondered at, because it is characteristic of the oppressing class and during the earlier days of class-divided society the ruling class was not in need of inventing any sweet coatings for it.

Primitive Communism

Such was the threat to the collective life of the tribal organisation on the pattern of which the Buddha was trying consciously to model his own organisation.

Our academic world, however, like the academic world everywhere outside the Soviet Union and people's democracies, has a phobia for communism. The consequence is that even the concept of primitive communism remains unnoticed by them. This has created much confusion in the field of our knowledge of ancient Indian history and culture. Materials obviously related to primitive communism abound there and our historians had to conjure up the most peculiar categories and force such materials into them.

R. C. Majumdar's *Corporate Life in Ancient India* is a typical anthology of such categories. He describes all sorts of corporate activities in ancient India—corporate activities in the economic, social, political and religious life, but leads us fundamentally to wonder as to what this "corporate life" really means. If it does not mean the group life or the group activities of the

tribal society, or the relics thereof, then it must appear to be something highly peculiar in the general context of the known laws of historical development.

Of the varieties of the corporate life in ancient India described by R. C. Majumdar, the one that interests us most in the present context is what he calls the corporate activities in religious life. Under this chapter-heading, the otherwise eminent scholar has laboriously collected a mass of materials which, if "properly understood," illustrate how the Buddha was consciously imitating the basic principles of the tribal society in order to build up his own organisation By "properly understood" we mean "interpreted in the light of what is already known in general of tribal society".

Here is an example of what we mean. In this tribal society, one's introduction to the full tribal status depends upon a ritual the essence of which is the simulation of death and rebirth: the young has to die as the young and be reborn as a full-fledged adult member of the tribe This is "initiation" in tribal society. It needs to be noted that no elaborate popular sanction is presupposed by this ceremony, because the tribal society being a kinship organisation, its membership is determined by descent. In the ancient religions we come across relics of this initiation ritual, though without its original purposiveness. For, as George Thomson remarks, "social institutions rendered obsolete by economic progress find a sanctuary in religion". The *Aitareya Brahmana*, for example, describes this death-and-rebirth mime in meticulous detail.

Membership. of the buddhistic order, too, presupposed the ceremonies of pabbajja and upasampada, though the details of the death-and-rebirth mime are lacking here excepting in so far as the candidate is shaven and has to change into new robes. Modern scholars have too easily, and unanimously, taken these ceremonies to mean initiation, and R. C. Majumdar enthusiastically describes the corporate character of the buddhistic initiation. But that is precisely the aspect of the buddhistic ceremony which goes to show that it is not initiation at all: the essence of the pabbajja and upasampada is an ultra-democratic sanction of all the members of the samgha, which is wanting in initiation either in its living form as found

in the tribal society or in its petrified version as found in the ancient religions.

Membership of the buddhistic samgha was not determined by descent and nobody could have any birth-right to it. As such, an entry into it could not merely be a matter of the attainment of maturity. In other words, the procedures referred to could not be instances of initiation. What, then, could these be? This question can be answered only by raising a further question, namely, how is membership determined in the tribal society when the candidate is not a natural kin and as such has no birth-right to membership? It is adoption. And an extraordinary, elaborate, democratic sanction is naturally a precondition for this in the tribal society. "Among the Iroquois", says Morgan, "the ceremony of adoption was performed at a public council of the tribe, which turned it practically into a religious rite." Morgan had a firsthand knowledge of this ceremony for he was himself adopted into the Hawk gens of the Senecas. And this is how he described the procedure:

After the people had assembled at the council house one of the chiefs made an address giving some account of the person, the reason for his adoption, the name and gens of the person adopting and the name bestowed upon the novitiate. Two chiefs taking the person by the arms then marched with him through the council house and back, chanting the song of adoption. To this the people responded in musical chorus at the end of each verse. The march continued until the verses were ended, which required three rounds. With this the ceremony concluded.

Morgan does not give any details of the verses. Presumably, these were designed to express the popular approval

We may now pass on to describe the buddhistic ceremony and see whether the Iroquois's one throws any light on it. The mahavagga of the Vinayapitaka, for example, tells us that in the case of the upasampada, it must be ascertained by formal questioning in the assembly of the bhikkus whether the candidate has any of the disqualifications for a bhikku. Then the instructor of the candidate must obtain formal permission of the assembly of the bhikkus, which to form a quorum must have the presence of at least ten, so that the candidate can

appear before the samgha. After preliminary questioning, the samgha is addressed thus.

"Let the samgha, revered sirs, hear me. This person N N. desires to receive the upasampada ordination with N.N. as upajjhaya Let anyone of the venerable brethren who is in favour of the upasampada ordination of N N. with N.N. as upajjhaya, be silent, and anyone who is not in favour of it speak.

"And for the second time I thus speak to you. Let the samgha (etc. as before).

"And for the third time I thus speak to you. Let the samgha (etc. as before).

"N N. has received the upasampada ordination from the samgha with N.N. as upajjhaya. The samgha is in favour of it and therefore it is silent. Thus I understand."

From this description of the adoption procedure we can easily see what was the real source of Buddha's inspiration and what organisational model he was trying to imitate. Other features of his samgha to which R. C. Majumdar draws our attention point to the same direction We shall quote some of these and only add that the vague description "corporate activity in religious life" hardly helps us to understand these.

This is how Majumdar describes the functioning of the local samghas.

The local corporations were governed on strictly democratic principles The general assembly of the monks constituted the sovereign authority and the procedure of its meetings was laid down with minute exactness.

In the first place all the fully ordained bhikkus in a community were members of the assembly. Every one of them had a right to vote No meeting was legal unless all the members entitled to vote were either present, or. being absent, formally declared their consent. A minimum number of members must be present in order that the act may be legal ..

The assembly having duly met, the mover had first to announce to the assembled bhikkus the resolution he was going to propose... After (it) followed the question put to the bhikkus present if they approved the resolution. The question was put either once or three times... After the resolution was

formally put before the samgha once or thrice, as the case might be, it was automatically passed if the members present kept silent. In case anyone spoke against it and there was a difference of opinion, the decision of the majority prevailed. Regular votes were taken and a taker of votes was appointed by the samgha for this purpose...

And, as for the buddhistic attitude to private property within the samgha, we quote the following from the same author:

The same relation between the individual and the corporation is brought out by the general presumption in the buddhist canon law that everything belongs to the samgha and not to any individual monk, and that the latter can only possess that which has been specially allotted to him. Even when things were allowed to a bhikku for personal use, they were considered as the property of the samgha. It is perfectly in keeping with this doctrine that on the death of a bhikku, the samgha became the owner of his property.

Our author here describes this interestingly as the "communistic theory of property", though, of course, he does not ask himself wherefrom the idea of such a theory came to Buddha's head.

Religion without God

We cannot leave the discussion of early buddhism without at least touching the question of the buddhist ideology.

Buddhism had originally no place for god in it: the creatures described in such works as *Gods of Northern Buddhism* by Alice Getty, are, on the admission of all, late intruders. Buddha himself is said to argue enthusiastically against all the traditional proofs for the existence of god. In a conversation with Anathapindika, Buddha is said to have argued thus.

If the world had been made by iswara, there should be no change nor destruction, there should be no such thing as sorrow or calamity, as right or wrong, seeing that all things, pure and impure, must come from him. If sorrow and joy, love and hate, which spring up in all conscious beings, be the work of

iswara, he himself must be capable of sorrow and joy, love and hatred, and if he has these, how can he be said to be perfect? If iswara be the maker, and if all beings have to submit silently to their maker's power, what would be the use of practising virtue? The doing of right or wrong would be the same, as all deeds are his making and must be the same with the maker. But if sorrow and suffering are attributed to another cause, then there would be something of which iswara is not the cause. Why, then, should not all that exists be uncaused too? If iswara be the maker, he acts either with or without a purpose. If he acts with a purpose, he cannot be said to be all perfect, for a purpose necessarily implies satisfaction of a want. If he acts without a purpose, he must be like the lunatic or suckling babe. Besides, if iswara be the maker, why should not people reverentially submit to him, why should they offer supplications to him when sorely possessed of necessity? And why should people adore more gods than one? Thus the idea of iswara is proved false by rational argument, and all such contradictory assertions should be exposed.

Many more examples like this can be quoted. But that is not necessary. The stark atheism of Buddha is already clear.

This aspect of buddhism has naturally created many headaches for the modern theologians. For the essence of religion is looked at as the belief in god and, as such, in buddhism we come across this astounding phenomenon of a religion without god! It is suggested that the definition of religion should be modified or twisted so that it can accommodate buddhism. An equally reasonable suggestion would be to revise the attitude to early buddhism and hesitate to call it religion.

However, we do not propose to take any side in this matter but simply raise a question: Can it be that the following conclusion of George Thomson has any light to throw on the godlessness of early buddhism? "The family", he observes, "as well as god, goes hand in hand with private property" That means that a characteristic of the preclass society is that it is not yet in need of the concept of god, for such a society is not yet in need of offering to the people any palliative remedy for the agonies of social injustice. "Religion is characterised by belief in god and the practice of prayer or sacrifice. The

lowest savages known to us have no gods and know nothing of prayer or sacrifice. Similarly, whenever we can penetrate the prehistory of civilised peoples, we reach a level at which again there are no gods, no prayer or sacrifice." How can early buddhism, if the basic source of its inspiration be primitive communism, at all speak of a belief in god?

Starting Point

The Buddha did not speak of god, nor of prayer nor sacrifice. What was he preaching then? He was speaking of agony and he was telling people that there was a way out of it. He said that there was agony everywhere and in everything, that the agony had a cause, that agony could be overcome and that there was a way to overcome it. These same statements are known as the four noble truths of buddhism.

The sermon at Benares runs thus:

This, O monks, is the sacred truth of suffering: Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unloved is suffering, to be separated from the loved is suffering, not to obtain what one desires is suffering, in short the five-fold clinging (to the earthly) is suffering.

This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the origin of suffering. It is the thirst (for being), which leads from birth to death, together with lust and desire, which finds gratification here and there: the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for being, the thirst for power.

This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the extinction of suffering. The extinction of this thirst by complete annihilation of desire: letting it go, expelling it, separating oneself from it, giving it no room.

This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the path which leads to the extinction of suffering. It is this sacred eight-fold path, to wit; right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought, right selfconcentration.

This is the essence of all that the Buddha wanted to preach. And, as Radhakrishnan so beautifully puts it, the starting point of the Buddha, his first noble truth, is "the tyranny of pain".

But the question is: Wherefrom did the Buddha obtain its idea? Was it from the actual sight of the tyrannical acts that he must have witnessed? He saw agony everywhere. Was it because of the fact that during those days of early despotism, in the unsettled conditions of society created by the triumph of the new values like plunder and deceit, exploitation and oppression, people around him presented the most pitiable sight and he listened to their moanings?

It obviously needs a great deal of credulity to take seriously the story that the Buddha was moved to this realisation of agony in everything by the sight of "a decrepit old man, a diseased man, a dead man and a monk". Yet this story of the four signs recurs in all the narratives of the Buddha's early years and "seems to be one of the best attested of the early traditions and it is most characteristic". So there may be something in it. Maybe, he was moved to this realisation by the actual sights of real life. And what such sights could have been can probably be reconstructed from the voluminous Jataka literature which is really encyclopedic in the matter of informing us of the conditions of the ordinary people then—the peasants, the artisans, the slaves. We cannot undertake the task here. Instead of that, we can concentrate on the second noble truth: for that also gives us a positive clue. As the cause of suffering, the Buddha mentions "the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for being, the thirst for power". The Buddha must have seen too much of such thirst in his days. For, as Jayaswal so ably characterises the central motive of the early despots, "'conquest', 'conquest', 'nothing but conquest' and 'to create oneness by that conquest' was the breath of eastern hindus in 600 to 400 BC."

"I behold rich in this world", says a buddhist sutra, "of the goods which they have acquired, in their folly they give nothing to others; they eagerly heap riches together and further and still further they go in their pursuit of enjoyment The king, although he may conquered the kingdoms of the earth, although he may be ruler of all the land this side the sea, up to the ocean's shore, would still insatiate, covet that which is beyond the sea..."

In another sutra, it is said. "the princes who rule the king-

doms, rich in treasures and wealth, turn their greed against one another, pandering insatiably to their desires. If these act thus restlessly, swimming in the stream of impermanence, carried along by greed and carnal desire, who then can walk on the earth in peace?"

This is how Engels characterises the great social upheavals in the context of which we are proposing to understand early buddhism:

The lowest interests—base greed, brutal sensuality, sordid avarice, selfish plunder of common possessions—usher in the new, civilised society, class society, the most outrageous means—theft, rape, deceit and treachery—undermine and topple the old, classless, gentile society.

And again.

In this manner the organs of the gentile constitution were gradually torn from their roots in the people, in gens, phratry and tribes, and the whole gentile order was transformed into its opposite: from an organisation of the tribes for the free administration of their own affairs it became an organisation for plunder and oppressing their neighbours, and correspondingly its organs were transformed from instruments of the will of the people into independenent organs for ruling and oppressing their own people. This could not have happened had not the greed for wealth divided the gentes into rich and poor, "had not property differences in a gens changed the community of interests into antagonism between members of a gens" (Marx), and had not the growth of slavery already begun to brand working for a living as slavish and more ignominious than engaging in plunder.

That is why Engels says that the emergence of the class society on the ruins of the preclass society looked like *a fall from the simple moral grandeur*. "The power of these primordial communities had to be broken, and it was broken. But it was broken by influences which from the outset appear to us as a degradation, a fall from the simple moral grandeur of the ancient gentile society."

This brings us to the fourth noble truth of buddhism Drawing, as he did, his inspiration from the preclass society or primitive communism, the Buddha suggested the way out of the

agony created by the new values of early class socety in reviving the simple moral grandeur of the gentile society He spoke of right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought, right selfconcentration —values as we can easily judge from the Jataka tales, that were most ruthlessly undermined in the real society of his time. This, of course, was historically inevitable and the simple moral grandeur of primitive communism had to be undermined. Even the Buddha could not revert the laws of history. What he could do was to create an illusion of the life of liberty, equality and fraternity of primitive communism. This was life in the buddhist samghas—classless organisations within the framework of the class society, where people could be fostered with the sense of equality and dhamma they were deprived of in their real life. That probably explains the success of early buddhism. But it also explains its failures For this illusory character of the solution that Buddha offered remained its vulnerable point, and it explains how buddhism, in spite of its denial of god, eventually became the state religion Buddhism, from its early inception, had all the prerequisites for being a religion.

"Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people."

Sunita, in the Theragatha, narrates the story of his conversion thus:

"I have come of a humble family. I was poor and needy. The work which I performed was lowly, sweeping the withered flowers. I was despised by men, looked down upon and lightly esteemed. With submissive mien I showed respect to many. Then I beheld the Buddha with his band of monks, as he passed, the great hero, into the most important town of Magadha. Then I cast away my burden and ran to bow myself in reverence before him. From pity for me he halted, that highest among men. Then I bowed myself at the master's feet, stepped up to him and begged him, the highest among all beings, to accept me as a monk. Then said unto me the gracious

master, the compassionator of all worlds 'Come hither, O monk', that was the initiation which I received."

Sunita entered the samgha and moved towards the fourth noble truth, but the world at large was left to realise the first noble truth, the truth concerning the tyranny of pain. For in spite of the communistic societies that the Buddha built, the real forces operating in the real class society could not be changed.

Buddha and the Prophets

George Thomson in his *First Philosophers* leads us to a new understanding of the hebrew prophets. It will be helpful for our understanding of early buddhism to quote his observations here, for the Buddha appears to have remarkable historical similarities with these prophets:

On the one hand, the principal trade route between Egypt and Mesopotemia passed through their territory... Again and again the plain of Esdraelon was traversed by foreign armies, looting as they went, and the people were subjected to repeated invasions, massacres, plantations, and deportations...

On the other hand, the great desert stretching from Gilead to the Persian Gulf remained an inexhaustible reservoir of pastoral tribes. These nomads were always on the move, and from time to time some of them settled among the Judaean hills. Thanks to this continual contact with their own ancestral institutions, the common people of Israel not only preserved their tribal traditions but cherished them with a fierce tenacity as they saw them threatened by economic and social changes arising from trade and war. Their spokesmen were the prophets, who, it has been observed, were "the inheritors and guardians of that democratic principle which Israel had preserved from nomad days".

If Solomon had been able to consolidate his kingdom, the prophets would have been suppressed. As it was, they preserved the ideal of tribal unity in a form determined by a special history of their people. Like the kingship, hebrew monotheism embodies "the imaginary substance of the tribe", but in a different and purer form. The idea of kingship was

imposed on the people by the ruling class as a means of consolidating its power. The idea of Jehovah was created by the people themselves as a symbol of their memories and aspirations. Its moral nobility springs from its historical origin as a vision of the classless society that had passed away and was to come again.

Of course the Buddha did not create any idea of Jehovah and it is here that the comparison appears to break down. But then the Buddha, too, was retaining "the imaginary substance of the tribe", though in a different form. It was in the form of his samghas. To the people, the samgha was a symbol of their memories and their aspirations

Strangely enough, from this point of view, the Buddha had even a closer similarity with another great social reformer, though the latter appeared in a qualitatively different historical setting He was Robert Owen. For Robert Owen, too, was building his samghas, the communist colonies, and like the Buddha, in the heart of a class divided society. Further, like the Buddha, Owen thought that a change of heart would bring in such a miracle. Such similarities may appear to be very strange, however, on a deeper understanding of the historical development we can see that there is nothing mysterious about it Both of them saw the tyranny of the class divided society. And because the Buddha stood very near its beginning while Owen near its end, the vision of a classless society could inspire both.

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

Y. Balaramamoorty

BUDDHA IS ACCEPTED AND REVERED by all as a great social reformer and as a prophet of love and nonviolence. No doubt he is all that but much more He was the first Indian thinker who made dialectics, the law of eternal change, the central core of his philosophy. Buddhist philosophy arose in the course of an ideological struggle against the existing upanishadic philosophy, which by that time became completely rigid and metaphysical. The upanishads tried to discover some unchanging, eternal reality behind all the changing and temporary phenomena of the world. This quest for the absolute led them to the concept of soul and the concept of parabrahma, the creator.

This metaphysical outlook so pervaded the intellectuals of that time, that they began to concentrate on the methods of realising the soul, the methods of renunciation and penance. Such problems—Is the world eternal or not? Is there a life after death or not? Is the soul same as the body or not?—became the main problems of philosophy Pandits and sadhus—the intellectuals of that time—used to engage themselves in

unending controversies about these problems. Gautama himself spent some years in these intellectual controversies and ultimately found them useless.

Against Scholasticism

So the first target of Gautama Buddha's attack was this web of scholasticism, which became a hindrance to free thinking, and which was rooted in the blind acceptance of some absolute categories. Buddha said in his very first discourse at Benares "Let us put aside such unprofitable and unsolvable questions (avyaktani) as the questions of beginning and end. I will teach you dharma. That being thus this comes to be. From the coming to be of that, this arises. That being absent, this does not happen. From the cessation of that this ceases. This is the dharma. Whoever accepts dharma, accepts the law of patichha samuppada (dependent origination)" (*Dialogues of Buddha*).

This law of dependent origination is the core of buddhist philosophy. Nothing exists by itself, nothing is absolute. Everything depends on something else. Everything is the effect of some cause. As long as the cause exists, effect also exists. When the cause ceases to be, the effect also vanishes. Everything is relative. Cause and effect are interrelated. One thing flows from the other.

Buddha developed this dharma further in his later discourses and, with the help of his philosophy of change, he shattered the concepts of an eternal soul and an eternal brahma. Though he started by asking people to ignore the scholastic problems of beginning and end, actually he gave an answer to those problems by introducing the concept of dependent origination.

World—A Process

Allied to the concept of dependent origination is the concept of impermanence, or chance. Cause and effect are interlinked. But how long does the cause exist? It is not eternal. If it is eternal then it cannot produce something else called the effect, so cause is temporary, nay momentary. Every minute

we see thousands of causes and effects. The effect then transforms itself into a cause and produces another effect. The transformation of cause into effect and vice versa is an endless process.

Buddha said in his Dhammapada. "O monks, know that everything that lives also dies. Everything has a cause. When the cause disappears the effect also disappears. Things that appear permanent are in reality temporary. They will also pass away. What appears to have reached the highest point of glory is bound to fall. Where there is a beginning there is also the end. Where there is unity there is also separation. Where there is life there is death."

This is how Buddha enunciated the law of contradiction, the law of unity and strife of opposites and proved that the world is an endless process. Monarchy, social tyranny, slavery, inequality—all are temporary. They will pass away and something else will come. This is the message of Buddha which he put in philosophical terminology. As day succeeds night the new succeeds the old. It is the dharma, the law of the world.

This idea of continuous change is clearly brought out by the buddhist monk, Nagasena, in his discourse with King Milinda, who is no other than the Greek king Menander who ruled northwestern India in 200 BC. This is the discourse between the king and Nagasena:

KING: He who is born, Nagasena, does he remain the same or become another?

NAGASENA: Neither the same nor another.

KING: Give me an illustration.

NAGASENA: O king, you were once a baby, a tender thing and small in size lying flat on your back. Was that the same as you who are now grown up?

KING: No. That child was one and I am another.

NAGASENA: If you are not the child it will follow that you have had neither mother nor father nor teacher. Every day we are new and yet not quite new. *There is persistent continuity as well as unceasing change* (*Milinda Panha*).

In the same *Milinda Panha*, there is another illustration where Nagasena gives the example of a candle that burns

from evening till morning and concludes "O king, the chain of elements is joined together. One element is always coming into being, another is always ceasing and passing away. Without beginning, without end, the change continues."

Buddha also used the simile of fire and a continuous flow of water to prove his idea of change It may here be recalled that the famous Greek dialectician, Heraclitus, also used the simile of flowing water to prove that the world is a process of continuous change.

To give one more illustration of the place this theory occupies in buddhistic philosophy, I shall quote this story.

Buddha after he attained enlightenment went to Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha, and resided in a mango grove. At that time there were many monks living in Rajagriha who were disciples of Sanjaya, Velattiputta and Nighantu Nathaputta– both brahmin scholars who embraced jainism.

One day a disciple of Buddha by name Assaji was going round the streets of Rajagriha begging for food Sariputta, then a disciple of Sanjaya met Assaji and asked what was the essence of Buddha's teaching Then Assaji replied "Existence flows from a cause. That cause the perfect one teaches and how it ends This is the doctrine of the great samana"

Subsequent history shows how Sariputta was impressed by this dynamic concept of the world in contrast with the absolutist philosophy of jainism, the philosophy of all souls Sariputta along with the other disciples went to Buddha and embraced buddhism, and become one of the most prominent buddhist bhikkus The story ends by saying, that all the intellectuals of Rajagriha embraced buddhism, deserting their previous teachers.

Emergence of the New

One of the essential aspects of dialectics is to recognise the emergence of the new from the old This recognition of the new makes the dialectical approach the philosophy of faith in human progress. History is not a repetition of old events. Human civilisation is a gradual progression from the lower to the higher and further on. Buddhism shares this faith in human

progress. The very theory of causation, where cause produces effect which is something new, is a proof of this.

Buddhaghosha, who lived in AD 400 gives another example: "Sour cream comes out of sweet milk If there was absolute sameness or absolute difference this could not happen"

Primitive Indian materialists, known as charvakas, who lived just before Buddha gave the very same illustration and drew the very same conclusion. They went even further and concluded that life emerged from inanimate substance in a process of evolution Buddhism, of course, did not go so far. But it recognises the emergence of the new in the course of change.

Acceptance of the law of change, without the recognition of the qualitative aspect, would have led buddhism to the mechanised law of rotation and not of change. This was the theory propounded by sankhyas, the germs of which existed even before Buddha.

Noble Humility

Buddha was an original thinker—besides he was a priest, whose every inch burnt with a passionate desire to liberate humanity from suffering. These two qualities combined to make him noble and humble in his pronouncements

To many of the pestering questions which the new converts used to put he would not answer. Once a monk Vachha Gotta repeatedly asked him about the life after death But Buddha would not answer. At last he said. 'Therefore Malukya Putra, whatsoever has not been revealed, let that remain unrevealed. And what has been revealed let it be revealed." (*Madhyama Nikaya*)

This was a plain admission, that he cannot give answers to all questions. He was not a knowall You can compare this attitude of humility to that of the intellectual arrogance which existed among the upanishadic teachers.

In a highly philosophical controversy between Gargi and Yajnavalkya, recorded in *Brihadaranyakopanishad,* Gargi puts any number of questions, at which the sage Yajnavalkya becomes

angry and curses her, "Gargi, do not talk too much, otherwise your head will be broken. There is a limit to reasoning."

Buddha not only showed humility, but also pointed out that what he taught must not be made a dogma by the disciples. In his last days which he spent in Kusinara, the country of the Mallas, he was asked by his close disciple, Ananda, about the duties of the disciples after his death.

To this Gautama replies. "The leaves of autumn are falling on all sides, and there are more of them than can be numbered. In like manner, I have given you a handful of truths But besides these there are many thousands of other truths that cannot be numbered... Be you lamps unto yourselves." The last words of Gautama which he uttered to Ananda lying under a tree in Kusinara, breathing his last, are these· "Do not grieve Ananda, that the Tathagata is passing away All that is born must necessarily die Go and preach the dharma." Thus ended the noble life of Buddha.

Social Significance

Indian history shows that buddhism played a revolutionary role by preaching equality, attacking the system of varnas, and giving hope to the downtrodden slave. The metaphysical attitude of the upanishads applied to the social field defended the varna system, slavery and upper class tyranny as absolute.

Buddhism raised the slogan of revolt. Everything changes. Nothing is permanent. The varna system also is not permanent. Buddha openly attacked in hundreds of his sermons—brahminical tyranny, varna system, monarchy and inequality. His heart melted at the suffering of the poor. When Buddha announced that his mission in life was to liberate humanity from suffering, it had a great social significance. All the oppressed and downtrodden—the low castes, the women, the poor, the indebted, the slaves—looked upon Buddha as a great saviour

This revolutionary significance of buddhism arises straight from the concept of change, the concept of dialectics. Compared to modern dialectics, buddhistic dialectics might be naive It was bound to be so considering the fact that it arose two thousand and five hundred years ago, when the Indian social

system was entering the stage of serfdom from that of slavery. Moreover this dialectics was not rooted in materialism but only in realism. But considered in the historical perspective, buddhist dialectics played the same revolutionary role in those days as the slogan of liberty, equality and fraternity of the 18th century played in modern Europe in ushering in a period of renaissance.

It opened the gates of free thinking in all fields of knowledge. People accustomed to think in terms of fixed digits began to think of the world as it is, as a process, a process of coming into existence and passing away. Let us find out what is passing away and what is coming into existence. Let us reject the old and accept the new. This is the silent message, nevertheless a revolutionary message, spread by buddhism.

The impact of this could be seen in the fields of physics, chemistry, logic, poetry, social customs, language and even script. Suffice it to say that buddhism served as a great lever of social transformation, the transformation from slavery to serfdom in India. In the words of Engels "Great historical turning points have been *accompanied* by religious changes only so far as the three world religions which have existed up to the present—buddhism, christianity and islam—are concerned." ("Ludwig Feuerbach", Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1949, p. 34)

God, Soul and Matter

What does buddhism say categorically regarding the absolutes—god, soul and matter? Buddhism outright rejected god and soul. Every school of buddhism, including the vijnanavadins, who are thoroughgoing subjective idealists, took pride in calling themselves an anatmavadin school.

In a lengthy discourse with Anathapindika, the millionaire disciple, Buddha argues against the existence of god and says. "If by the absolute is meant something out of relation to all known things, its existence cannot be established by any reasoning. The whole universe is a system of relations. We know nothing that is or can be unrelated. If the absolute is devoid of qualities, then all things arising from him ought like-

wise to be devoid of qualities. But in reality all things are circumscribed by qualities. Hence the absolute cannot be their cause." (*Buddhacharita*)

Buddhism is equally vehement in rejecting the concept of an eternal soul which lives even after the body dies Monk Nagasena in a discourse with Milinda argues against the soul and concludes thus. "It is on account of all those things, the thirtytwo kinds of organic matter in a human body, and the five elements of a being—that I came under the generally understood term, the designation in common use 'Nagasena'—just as due to the coexistence of various parts, the chariot is so called, just so is it when we talk of 'being'." (*Milinda Panha*)

Matter in the highest form of organisation produces the quality called consciousness. This is the modern theory. When matter dissolves, consciousness also dissolves Nagasena's explanation comes very near to this modern conception of matter and consciousness.

Buddhism which rejected the absolute categories, god and soul, so thoroughly, did not reject matter outright Nor did it accept the primacy of matter over mind in which case it would have been thoroughgoing materialist philosophy Discussing the relation of mind and matter, Buddha tells his disciple Ananda thus "As two bundles of sticks leaning against each other stand, so also, my friend, consciousness grows out of name and material form (namarupa). Name and material form grow out of consciousness Both are interdependent. The chain goes on further" (*Samyukta Nikaya*).

Matter and mind are interdependent. There is no primary or secondary substance. Indeed there is no substance at all. Every substance is a process, a process of coming into being and passing away Here we find in the same breath a high form of dialectics and at the same time a rejection of the materialistic doctrine.

Historical Background

Dialectical materialism accepts matter as primary and mind as secondary in the course of evolution. This acceptance does not mean that matter in the view of dialectical materialists is

an unchanging, eternal category. Matter is a form of energy, a process There is no contradiction in accepting matter to be a form of energy, a process, and at the same time ascertaining its primacy over consciousness, in the course of evolution But to accept only the aspect of interaction and not the primacy of matter leads one to confusion regarding the primacy of matter over mind. It is this vagueness and ambiguity in Buddha's teachings that led to so many schools of thought soon after his death. There are nearly thirty schools of buddhists of which only four have any philosophical significance. Among these four, two are realistic—vaibhashika and sautrantika, and two are idealistic—madhyamika and vijnanavada.

This attitude of vagueness regarding the objectivity of matter is mainly due to the historical background in which buddhism had arisen. It arose as revolt against the metaphysical trends that existed in India, both idealistic and materialistic.

We know that charvakas existed before Buddha and preached that matter was primary and mind was secondary. That was thoroughgoing materialism But it was mechanical. What is matter? Matter consists of indivisible atoms. Indivisible atoms are the absolute category While rejecting the absolute categories of the idealistic philosophy, god and soul, lokayatas introduced another absolute category called "indivisible atom". The vaiseshika and sankhya systems also shared this mechanistic view. No doubt in the history of materialistic philosophy charvakas occupy a high place in spite of their mechanistic stand But Buddha, whose main concern was to show that everything was impermanent and changing, treated lokayatas and idealists alike. Dealing with the problem of objective reality of the world, Gautama says "Everything is—this is one extreme. Everything is not—this is another extreme O Kachana, I say everything is and is not. This is the truth The truth is in the middle" (*Samyukta Nikaya*)

Though Buddha does not name them as such, it is clear from the above that he was trying to steer midway between the idealism of upanishads and the materialism of charvakas. neither accepting nor rejecting the objectivity of the external world, but laying the greatest stress on the law of causation and the concept of process.

But it must be noted that the Buddha concentrated his main fire against the upanishadic idealism and not on materialism. Most of the immediate disciples of Buddha, like Sariputta and Moggalana, belonged to the realistic school of vaibhashikas, which was very near to materialism.

The *Abhidamma Kosa*, the book that expounds the philosophy of the vaibhashikas says. "Matter is the collective organism, consisting of the fourfold substrata of colour, smell, taste and contact. The minutest form of rupa is paramanu. It is indivisible, and yet it is not permanent. It is like a momentary flash into being."

"Paramanu is indivisible and yet is not permanent." In this statement the vaibhashikas accepted materialism as existed at that time and tried to interpret it with the help of buddhist dialectics.

Commenting on the above statement the Russian philosopher Stcherbatsky says. "The universal elements of matter are manifested in their actions or functions. They are consequently more energies than substances."

Matter is a form of energy. Matter and motion are inseparable. These are the latest theories of science. It would not be incorrect to say that the vaibhashika concept of matter and change comes nearest to the modern concept

That this realistic trend, which became prominent after Buddha, existed even during the lifetime of Buddha is clear from the fact that Sariputta and Moggalana belonged to this school. Sariputta was the one disciple who earned the highest respect from Gautama, and who was designated by him to be his philosophical successor. But all this literature is preserved only in the Chinese language, and till that is translated into our own languages, we have to depend on scattered extracts.

Buddha talked about karma. But his concept of karma was different from that of the upanishadic philosophers. Upanishadic philosophers used karma in the sense of religious ritual or performance which would purify persons from the effects of their evil deeds. Buddha vehementaly condemned religious rituals and said man must suffer for the things he did in this world itself What you have sown, you must reap. You cannot escape

the consequences of your actions by performing religious rites. Thus the word karma was used by Buddha in a sense just opposite to that used in the upanishads

This is best illustrated by the story of Angulimala. Angulimala was a highway robber and later became a buddhist monk. Once he went into the city begging and the people recognising in him the old robber, stoned him Angulimala ran to Gautama and complained Gautama said "You are suffering in this life itself for the evil deeds you have committed. Endure it, you will be all right. Is it not better to suffer the small punishment in this life itself than to suffer greater punishment in the life to come" ("Angulimala Sutta", *Madhyama Nikaya*)

This story indicated the attitude of Buddha to karma and as the same time exposed the weakness in this concept. It shows how Buddha was slowly sliding from the concept of karma, to the concept of rebirth

Rebirth and Nirvana

Buddha denied soul and hence the theory of transmigration of souls. But does life end after death? What about the good and bad deeds committed by man in this life? Will they perish with him? What about the concept of proeess? Life is an endless process. How can it end at a point?

This apparent contradiction is solved by modern dialectics by realising that life in general is endless, humanity and progress are endless and the good and evil deeds of man are remembered by his successors The individual body and mind vanish but his contribution to society lives and becomes part of the eternal human process.

But Gautama did not come to that conclusion. He said there is a continuity, a stream of human consciousness even for individual lives. A lamp fades out and kindles another lamp. A man dies. His consciousness (which is a process) enters another body. Thus the theory of rebirth is introduced into buddhism by the backdoor.

Gautama being essentially a reformer and a philosopher is an introvert. Attainment of mental peace is the aim he put

forth before mankind. The world is full of sorrow. The cessation of sorrow is the aim of life. It can be attained by ashtangamarga—a code of personal ethics. The criterion of ethics is selfcontrol. Selfcontrol when it reaches the highest point leads one to a state of bliss. That is nirvana. This can be attained in this life itself. Nirvana is a changeless state of eternal rest.

It is possible that Buddha himself developed this idea of nirvana more as a psychological state of rest, the culmination of his ashtangamarga than as a philosophical tenet. But there is no doubt that this concept went directly against all his previous dialectics. The theory of interdependence and the theory of eternal change which were consistently applied by Buddha in all other aspects failed here. Man and society, the individual and the collective, are interdependent. Man can attain a state of rest, equanimity and balance not in isolation but by actually discharging his social duties. A mental state of rest and balance need not be an eternal changeless state to give the necessary mental solace. Change and rest are the inseparable opposites of the dialectical negation. This is the modern concept.

During the lifetime of Buddha the two opposites, the pursuit of individual nirvana and the aim of liberating humanity, were balanced. But after his death, a great schism broke out in buddhism. The hinayanas stressing on individual nirvana, and the mahayanas stressing on spreading the message of Buddha to all people, even though in a diluted form.

To sum up, buddhistic philosophy as propounded by Gautama in spite of the concepts of nirvana, rebirth and karma was essentially a philosophy of eternal change. It was the school which raised the standard of revolt against the metaphysical thinking of upanishads. It was the school which introduced the concepts of change, emergence of the new and endless progress in Indian philosophical thinking. Buddhism as a religion is now practically extinct in India. But the mentality of "change according to times" which is now a part of Indian culture is mainly the contribution of buddhism to India. In the words of Oldenberg, the famous biographer of Buddha, "Upanishads saw being in all becoming, Buddha saw becoming in all being" (*Life of Buddha*, p. 225).

Main Schools of Buddhism

Gautama Buddha died in the year 483 BC. Soon after, a convention of buddhist monks was held at Rajagriha under the patronage of King Ajatasatru and it was decided to propagate the dharma.

Very soon differences arose among the monks about various details of religious ceremonies, regulations and rules. A second council was held at Vaisali about 300 BC where the buddhist monks split into two camps—theravadins and mahasanghikas. The differences were not on philosophical issues but only on religious practices.

A third council was held at the time of Asoka (250 BC) at Pataliputra to iron out the differences but it proved of no avail. Finally a fourth council was held in Kashmir at the time of Kanishka (AD 78)—where for the first time buddhism split into two camps, the hinayana and the mahayana. The differences between these two schools were both religious and philosophical.

Asvaghosha's Tathatatha

Asvaghosha, a contemporary of Kanishka and a famous Sanskrit poet and dramatist, is also the founder of the mahayana school.

We know that Buddha rejected the concept of an eternal soul and propounded the theory of dependent origination. Asvaghosha removed this cornerstone of dialectics from buddhist philosophy and introduced the concept of an eternal soul that lives even after a man dies. He did not reject the law of causation outright. He made provision for it by saying that the soul has two aspects, the tathatatha aspect and the samsara aspect. The samsara aspect is subject to birth, growth and death, but the tathatatha aspect is above this law of causation. Tathatatha is subject neither to transformation nor destruction.

Thus Asvaghosha removed the kernal out of buddhist philosophy and put it line with the traditional upanishadic philosophy. In the matter of religion, the mahayana school introduced idolatry, worship of Buddha, erection of chaityas and

stupas and made buddhism a strict religion with all the necessary appendages.

NAGARJUNA'S SUNYATA

Nagarjuna who lived near about AD 180 made a last attempt to rescue the dialectics of Buddha. He too belonged to the school of mahayana, made Nagarjunakonda in Andhra the centre of his activity and spread the mahayana doctrine to various parts of India and even to foreign countries. He introduced a new concept called sunyata and formulated his theory of madhyamikavada.

Sunyavada has been generally understood as a doctrine of absolute nihilism but a careful analysis shows that it is nothing but the revival of the theory of dependent origination which was originally propounded by Buddha, a theory of relativity.

Nagarjuna says in his *Madhyamika Sutra* thus: "The fact of dependent origination is called by me as sunyata. There is no dharma of things which is not dependent on some other condition regarding its origin. Therefore there is no dharma which is not sunyata."

Just like Buddha, Nagarjuna called his theory madhyamikavada, the theory of the middle path. He does not categorically deny the existence of the objective world nor does he accept it. He says, reality is relative and not absolute Everything is real within certain limits. Beyond those limits it is unreal. Is the objective world real? Yes, it is real as far as wordly knowledge goes (samvruthi satya). But from the view of the transcendental truth (paramartha satya) it is unreal. Since Nagarjuna was the great philosopher who tried to restore the life breath of buddhism, namely dialectics, from being buried under the mahayana religion, he was respected by later buddhist schools as the incarnation of Buddha himself.

The theory of relativity is all right as far as it attacks the dogmatic concepts. But when it goes further and denies the validity of any objective truth, it enters on slippery ground. Instead of being a theory which by attacking absolutism makes the way clear for free thinking, it reduces itself into a theory that doubts everything, cannot ascertain anything. We have

seen how this danger was inherent in the teachings of Buddha himself. Nagarjuna made a heroic attempt to restore it after 600 years, and did propound his dialectics with great skill His work called *Prajna Paramita* (The Limits of Knowledge) is esteemed very highly in buddhistic circles. But with all that, buddhism by the time of Nagarjuna had already become a conventional religion, and the dialectical aspect did not go much into the masses, so as to have its effect on the thinking process.

Discussing the place of relativism in dialectics Lenin says in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* "Dialectics certainly contains relativism. It recognises the relativity of all our knowledge, not in the sense of denial of objective truth, but in the sense of the historically conditional nature of the limits of approximation of our knowledge of this truth."

Nagarjuna stressed so much on relativity and ignored objectivity with the result that soon after his death, another school arose in buddhism, which branded madhyamikavada as nihilism and went to the other extreme of denying the reality of the world completely and stating that mind or consciousness is the only reality.

ALAYAVIJNANA OF VIJNANAVADINS

This school of subjective idealists were called vijnanavadins and also yogacharins because they practised yoga, as a method to attain nirvana. They denied the objective world completely and upheld only the absolute mind or the alayavijnana as the reality. Their alayavijnana is akin to Hegel's "absolute spirit". The propounders of this school of thought were Asanga and his brother Vasubhandu (AD 420-500) and Dignaga (AD 500)—the last one lived in Andhra.

This theory completely repudiated the theory of dependent origination propounded by Buddha Not only that, it twisted the very words of Buddha to give them an opposite meaning It is an example of how words removed out of the context and twisted with purpose lose their original meaning and are transformed into their opposite.

In the *Lankavathara Sutta,* supposed to be written or com-

piled by Dignaga, the mahamati or the enlightened one says thus.

"Mine is not a causeless theory of causation which results in an interconnection of cause and conditions. I speak of that being so this is—because of my seeing into the nature of the external world, which is nothing but the self mind. If the people do not see the world as something seen of mind, the fault is committed by them but not by my theory of causation"

The words which were originally used by Buddha to fight scholasticism are here twisted to deny the objectivity of the world itself and the people are blamed for their ignorance. What a great fall from the noble humility of Buddha to this attitude of arrogance!

The vijnanavadins condemn Nagarjuna's madhyamikavada vehemently by labelling it nihilism. "It is better to cherish the notion of ego than to regard the world as being and nonbeing. Those who regard the external world as changing every moment now splitting, now dividing—they too are doomed to ruin."

It needs no argument to prove that this vijnanavada is very much like the subjective idealism of Sankara, which came as a hurricane and swept away all these theories, basing itself on uncompromising idealism.

Realistic Schools

The two realistic schools that branched off from buddhism were the vaibhashikas and sautrantikas. Both these schools together are called sarvasthivadins since they accepted the existence of every external object perceived by sense. In matters of religion both of them belonged to the hinayana school and hence were not very popular in India.

Both these schools believe in the objectivity of the external world without any reservation. Both agree that sense perception is the source of all our knowledge. In accepting practice as the source of knowledge, they come near to the modern materialistic theory of knowledge.

While the vaibhashikas categorically say that we derive knowledge through sense perception, the sautrantikas make

a little reservation in saying that knowledge is derived from the impression of the external world on our mind.

Right knowledge, according to the sautrantikas, is the knowledge by which one can actually acquire the thing he wants. All illusory perceptions like the appearance of a fruit in a dream are illusory just because you cannot realise it. Objects are always momentary. But it does not mean that they do not have validity within those limits. Reality and relativity are not contradictory. They are only complementary.

There is no doubt that these two schools, vaibhashikas and sautrantikas come nearest to modern materialism and dialectics on many points. A further study of these two schools, the literature of which is still mainly in Chinese, might reveal much more regarding the true nature of early buddhist thought.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE TEACHING OF BUDDHA

Ram Bilas Sharma

THE CELEBRATIONS OF BUDDHA JAYANTI have evoked wide interest in the teaching of Buddha both among the leaders of the Indian bourgeoisie and progressive intellectuals. Buddha was an Indian and the founder of one of the first world religions. This article deals with only some aspects of the teaching of Buddha.

GANA ORGANISATION

Siddhartha Gautama belonged to the tribe of the Sakyas. "The administration and judicial business of the clan was carried out in public assembly at which young and old alike were present, in their common mote hall at Kapilavastu" (Rhys Davids). The state had not yet emerged in their tribe, there was as yet no public power standing above the society with an army, prison, law courts, etc. There were many such tribes in northern and eastern India in the first millennium BC. They

were often called ganas where authority was vested in the whole people and not in a select governing class.

K. P. Jayaswal made a detailed study of the ganas in his work *Hindu Polity* He says. "A great reason of their political strength was that a republic was *nation-in-arms.*" Where you have a nation-in-arms, there is no public power standing above the society. Alluding to the discussion on ganas in the Mahabharata, Jayaswal says, "Gana refers to the whole body politic, the entire political community, and, in the alternative, the parliament, and not to the 'governing body' only (a view to which Dr Thomas inclines)."

Equality in the ganas was determined by birth. The Mahabharata says, "There is universal equality by birth (in the ganas) and also there is equality by kula." In other words, these organisations were based on blood kinship Rahul Sankrityayan in his article on "Buddhist Dialectics" (see p 2, supra) says about the Lichhavi gana that "democracy existed only for those who belonged to the Lichhavi clan" and "the non-Lichhavi brahmin or grahapati (trader) caste though free had no right of vote for the senate (samsad)".

Wealth and inequality were growing in these ganas The Mahabharata points out that the danger to the gana organisations arose from within them—the inevitable disputes with growth of wealth and private property. The priest, the trader and the nobility along with the ordinary peasants—this typical fourfold division of feudal society, our wellknown varna system —were emerging. Slaves also existed among them as in most tribal societies.

As a result of the growth of private property, power was being concentrated in the hands of a few families. These were sometimes called rajanyas, the families from whom the chiefs were elected. Jayaswal draws attention to the meaning of the word: "Rajanyas being leaders of families consecrated to rulership." In some of the ganas, only those were entitled to sit in the assembly "who furnished the state with an elephant". The ganas were thus tribal societies in a state of transition to feudalism about the middle of the first millennium BC. They represented a social system that was disintegrating in face of feudalism that was emerging.

Feudal Monarchies

Side by side with the ganas, there existed fullfledged feudal monarchies, with state as public power standing above the society—the kingdom of Magadha ruled by King Bimbisara and afterwards by his son Ajatasatru and the powerful kingdom of Kosala ruled by Prasenjit. In this world of feudal monarchies and ganas, Siddhartha Gautama made his appearance. After leaving Kapilavastu, the first place Gautama visited was Rajagriha, the capital of the feudal kingdom of Magadha. "The teachers of the Ganges valley had probably a greater reputation for learning and sanctity than the rough wits of the Sakya land and this may have attracted Gautama" (Sir Charles Eliot: *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 135). Enlightenment came to him outside the Sakya land in Gaya and he preached his doctrine for the first time in Benares, the important cultural centre of northern India. "For about fortyfive years he moved about Kosala, Magadha and Anga visiting the two capitals Savatthi and Rajagriha and going as far west as the country of the Kurus" (*Ibid*, p. 147). Thus Buddha's field of activity was primarily the two feudal monarchies of Magadha and Kosala and not the ganas.

Feudal Patrons

The leaders of these monarchies, and not so much the aristocracies of the ganas, became the patrons of Buddha both in his lifetime and afterwards. Big merchants also became his followers. The feudal state needed a religion and Buddha supplied a state-religion, a well-organised church, the first of its kind in India and perhaps in the world. This was because he did not touch upon the basic contradictions of feudal society, the contradiction between the small producer and the exploiter of his labour, the prince and the merchant.

He criticised brahmins but this criticism is made from the standpoint of the prince and the merchant whose right to exploit others he does not challenge. The contradiction between brahmanism and buddhism is partly explained by the contradiction among the property owners, the brahmins and the kshatriyas. Buddha is more against false brahmins than "true" brah-

mins. "Him I call indeed a brahmana who calls nothing h's own, whether it be before, behind, or between, who is poor, and free from the love of the world" (*Dhammapada*).

With this many of the brahmins themselves would have agreed. Buddha criticised sacrifices, rituals, etc. and demanded good conduct from true brahmins. The *Chhandogya Upanishad* parodies a priestly procession in a sacrifice and calls it "a procession of dogs chanting 'Om! Let us eat. Om! Let us drink'!" (*History of Philosophy· Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 57). The *Mundaka Upanishad* makes a scathing attack on ritual and compares sacrificial forms to unsafe boats trusting which fools are overtaken by old age and death (*Ibid*). Not to mention other schools of Indian philosophy, the upanishads themselves at times criticise the priestly order and ritual. Hence such criticism on the part of Buddha was not original. Like brahmins, Buddha's followers were above the social law. Bimbisara proclaimed that "It is not permitted to do anything to those who join the order of the *Sakya-puttiya*" (*Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 242) Instead of the brahmanic priesthood, Buddha was creating another priesthood and not assailing the basis of priesthood itself.

Appeal of Doctrine

The great attraction in the teaching of Buddha for princes and merchants was the doctrine of the cessation of desire. The world is full of sorrow. This sorrow is common to all, the exploiters and the exploited alike. Instead of focusing attention on class greed, the suffering engendered by the domination of one class over another, Buddha spoke of greed in general, suffering and misery in general and hence the path of human salvation pointed out by him is also general and was incapable of alleviating, much less removing altogether, the specific human suffering of a given social epoch. "By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another" (*Dhammapada*). Hence, instead of fighting the oppressors, the duty of a person is to eradicate impurity from within himself.

Suffering and evil exist in the individual also but these are different from suffering and evil that exist on a social scale. The suffering and evil of class contradictions cannot be removed by the purification of the individual. Only when these contradictions are removed can the social suffering and evil engendered by them be also removed. This is the reason that such an outlook as that of individual sin and salvation has always been acceptable to the ruling classes.

Instead of struggling against evil, man becomes passive towards it Passive acquiescence in suffering is implied in the struggle for selfpurification This passivity is still very popular with certain leaders and thinkers in India It certainly hinders the organisation and the activity of the masses. It serves to conceal the real roots of the misery of the people and the way to end it

Taking the individual by himself, it may be pointed out that his salvation lies not in the negation of desires but in their control and fulfilment for individual and social welfare. Buddha modified the extreme asceticism of some of the Indian schools but his outlook remained basically that of the traditional yogis and sanyasis who found virtue in the renunciation of the world. The greatest evil for such people is the very fact of man's birth in the world Desire and birth are raised to a metaphysical plane and salvation is said to lie in a ceasing of the imaginary chain of births and rebirths. "Some people are born again, evil doers go to hell, righteous people go to heaven; those who are free from all wordly desires enter nirvana" (*Dhammapada*).

World Outlook

This brings us to the question of Buddha's world outlook. He called himself a follower of the middle path, the path between materialism and spiritualism. This implies not an acceptance of materialism but its rejection. Dialectical materialism apart, Buddha was opposed to the traditional materialist doctrines of his own times. Professor Tarapada Chowdhury has pointed out the existence of the materialist outlook in the *Rig-Veda* itself. "In the *RV* the incidence of human ignorance (i. 146 5 6. 10 88 18 etc) and of the elusiveness of truth

(5. 85. 8; 10, 139, 5; cf. 8. 100. 3) is frankly admitted" (*History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Vol. I., p. 51). "Enquiry about material and efficient causes is common (*RV.* 10. 81. 2, 4; 168. 3)" (*Ibid.*). Professor Dakshinaranjan Bhattacharya says about this early materialism, "Matter as ultimate reality was first envisaged by Brihaspati Laukya or Brahmanaspati of the *Rig-Veda*" (*Ibid.*, p. 133).

The famous charvakas were the followers of Brihaspati. Theirs was a well-established historical tradition in ancient India. "Almost every period of Indian history has champions of the charvaka view. The sage Javali of the Ramayana was a teacher of materialism. His advice to Rama is comparable with the charvaka view... The teachings of Ajita-kesa-kambalin, who, according to the old buddhistic and jain works, was a contemporary of Lord Buddha, resemble the teachings of the charvaka school. Payasi, who was Ajita's successor, championed Ajita's view." Both before and after Buddha, the exponents of this materialist school existed in India. The different idealist systems vilified the charvakas. The repeated reproaches only show the virility of that school.

For the charvakas, matter is primary; the human mind and consciousness are secondary. "That matter is the ultimate reality is implied from Brihaspati's dictum—'Out of matter came forth life'... Consciousness is a quality of the body. It originates from material particles when they mysteriously combine and become transformed into a human organism", (*Ibid.*, p. 135). As opposed to this materialist view, Buddha said: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts." From this follows the corollary that by ceasing to think of desires, man can put an end to the chain of births and rebirths.

The charvakas held: "With the dissolution of the body, consciousness disappears and each of its constituent elements is mingled with its kind leaving behind only ashes and dust" (*Ibid.*, p 135). As opposed to this materialist view, Buddha held that the chain of karma pursues a man even after his death. The virtue of nirvana lies in negating this chain effect after death.

Rahul Sankrityayan says of this aspect of the teaching of Buddha: "Just as a man's mental culture proves his earlier studies even when he has left the college for a number of years and has forgotten all that he read there, in the same way, why should not the precociousness of a child be treated as the result of his earlier study?... Children who were extraordinary mathematicians and musicians are seen to have been born of uneducated parents. Thinking over the problem in the abovementioned way, we feel that the lifestream of this body is only a link in the prolonged lifestream, which has been flowing earlier for a long time" (*Baudha Darshan*, p. 16). However, he admits that this is not materialism.

Referring to this fourth characteristic of the teaching of Buddha, he says, "but this fourth feature, i.e., not to accept this life-process as confined to this body, separates it from materialism and at the same time is a beautiful way for an individual to make the future hopeful without which it is difficult to put any ideal into practice" (*Ibid.*, p. 17). Buddha denied the soul but accepted the continuity of individual consciousness even after death. In this he was an idealist just as the charvakas were materialists.

Buddha's Idealism

Discussing Buddha's philosophy, Balaramamoorty says in connection with the charvakas, "What is matter? Matter consists of indivisible atoms. Indivisible atoms are the absolute category. While rejecting the absolute categories of the idealistic philosophy, god and soul, lokayatas introduced another absolute category called 'indivisible atom'. The Vaiseshika and Sankhya systems also shared this mechanistic view... But Buddha, whose main concern was to show that everything was impermanent and changing, treated lokayatas and idealists alike." (See p. 45, supra.)

Engels wrote in *Dialectics of Nature*, "The whole of nature accessible to us forms a system, an interconnected totality of bodies, and by bodies we understand here all material existence extending from stars to atoms, indeed right to ether particles, in so far as one grants the existence of the last named... And

if, in addition, matter confronts us as something given, equally uncreatable as indestructible, it follows that motion also is as uncreatable, as undestructible." Engels points out that it was the philosophers who, before the scientists, discovered this truth. "And since this recognition", he says, "had been reached by philosophy long before it came into effective operation in natural science, it is explicable why philosophy, fully two hundred years before natural science, drew the conclusion of the uncreatability and indestructibility of motion." Hence to believe that nothing is permanent in this world in an absolute sense is not materialism but idealism.

Buddha did not believe in god or soul and he did not accept the authority of any sacred book. The charvakas also said the same thing and he is indebted to them for this much of rationalism in his teaching. But instead of god, he held up nirvana, a counterpart to theistic salvation; instead of the soul in bondage, he put up the karma chain which binds man and causes pain in more than one birth. Instead of the sacred book, the pious have only to rely on Buddha's own enlightenment to furnish any proof of the continuity of this cause and effect chain even after death. In choosing the middle path, Buddha rejected materialism and accepted idealism. His words are different; the content is essentially the same.

Theory of Causality

The law of dependent origination is the central point in Buddha's logic. Whatever exists arises from causes and conditions and is in every respect impermanent. The cause does not live in the effect but ceases the moment the effect comes into being. Rahul Sankrityayan says, "Buddha's pratitya is such a cause as is always seen to be vanishing in the very moment before the birth of a thing or an event" (*Baudha Darshan*, p. 33). The words "dependent origination" do not accurately reflect the sense of the words *pratitya-samutpada*. It means "when one thing vanishes or perishes, another is born" (*Ibid.*). Professor T. R. V. Murti has put it very neatly thus: "Change in the buddhist conception is replacement of one entity by another; it is a series of entities emerging and perishing in

entirety; one entity does not become another" (*History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 195).

This is the metaphysician's mode of reasoning. "For him a thing either exists, or it does not exist; it is equally impossible for a thing to be itself and at the same time something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another; cause and effect stand in an equally rigid antithesis one to the other" (*Anti-Duhring*). For Buddha, cause and effect are rigidly opposed to each other. Hence, a thing ceases every moment instead of ceasing and not ceasing at the same time. Hence the universal and the particular are rigidly opposed to each other. There are only particulars and no universals.

According to Professor Murti, "The buddhist holds that all existence is particular; the universal is a thought construct, a vikalpa." S. Chatterjee and D. Datta in *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* say in connection with this logic, "Man is only a conventional name for a collection of different constituents, the material body, the immaterial mind, the formless consciousness, just as a chariot is a collection of wheels, axles, shafts, etc." Such logic can lead only to the denial of reality. Instead of combating metaphysics, it supports it. Human consciousness continues from one life into another but the objective reality perishes in the moment. Since the succession of entities is not a continuous but discontinuous stream, Rahul Sankrityayan justly remarks, "Basing himself on this discontinuous stream of pratitya-samutpada, Nagarjun later on developed his shunyavad" (*Baudha Darshan*, p. 33).

Since only the particulars exist, "there are as many things as there are distinguishable 'parts' or aspects" (Prof. Murti). Even this part or thing is "not only an instant lacking duration, but also a spatial point lacking all magnitude and diversity as well" (*Ibid.*). Further: "By the same logic we are led to the denial of the *universal* or identical aspect of things. Each entity is discrete and unique" (*Ibid.*). Such logic does not help one to understand movement. "There is neither flow nor movement in each entity nor in the series; it is the spectator who projects that into the several static entities" (*Ibid.*).

Early Dialectic

According to the sankhya system, prakriti is one entity but is composed of the opposite elements of satva, rajas and tamas. "Satva is primarily responsible for selfmaintenance and self-manifestation of prakriti. Rajas is the cause of all activity and energising. Tamas is responsible for inertia and restraint of activity" (*History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 244). This is more dialectical since it embraces the unity of opposites and sees in nature both inertia and movement. According to the nyaya vaiseshika school, "the atoms of earth, water, fire and air are eternal, while compounds made of them are noneternal" (*Ibid.*, p. 225). This is more dialectical because it helps one to see both permanence and impermanence in nature.

The charvakas held that the causal connection is not invariable. Where there is fire there is smoke, but the smoke depends on the wetness of the fuel. "So long as the relation between two phenomena is not proved to be unconditional, it is an uncertain ground for inference" (Chatterjee and Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p. 61). What the charvakas denied was not causality but its invariability. This helps one to study a given phenomenon in all its interconnectedness and not to base any conclusion only on some aspect of it.

The jain thinkers held that "reality is characterised by origination, decay and permanence" (*History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, p. 140). This is more dialectical since it helps one to understand the relation between change and identity. The doctrine of asti-nasti-vada implies that "you can describe an object *from one point of view* that it exists and *from another point of view* that it does not" (*Ibid.*, p. 142). This is just what the metaphysician does not understand. For him it is impossible for a thing to be itself and at the same time something else. The asti-nasti-vada view is more comprehensive and dialectical.

For the charvakas, consciousness did not exist in the four material elements and yet it existed in the material body of man. Their thesis was that "qualities not present originally in any of the component factors may emerge subsequently when

the factors are combined together" (Chatterjee and Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p. 64). If Buddha had followed the methods of the charvakas, he would not have been led to the ultimate denial of life and reality and to a belief in the chain of births and rebirths and the salvation in nirvana.

Service to Feudalism

Thus both in his method and outlook, Buddha is an idealist. His teaching does not follow an imaginary path between materialism and idealism; it rejects the former and embraces the latter. He is not a simple idealist like Shankara. In the epoch of rising feudalism materialist philosophy was still a force to reckon with. Buddha had to convince not the backward people of a primitive communist society but intelligent thinkers of a rising propertied class. This is the reason that Buddha's idealism does not become apparent immediately.

He accepted the charvaka rejection of god, soul and the authority of the vedas. This was the best way of combating the charvakas. This resemblance with the charvakas in rejecting god, soul and the vedas is superficial; what is essential to Buddha's teaching is the chain of karma, the salvation from the cycle of births and rebirths and the attitude of passivity and non-resistance to social evil. Whereas the great epics of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana taught the people to hate and destroy the unjust forces of society, Buddha taught men not to see evil outside themselves but to practise the cessation of desires.

Like the brahmins, his followers were placed above the law; they preached the virtue of poverty and renunciation but participated in the fruits of the labour of others by becoming the priestly guardians of society. The brahmins also nominally held no property and yet they became the main props of feudal property owners. Despite renunciation, Buddha's point of view is that of the wealthy classes—the merchants and the princes. His teaching had an attraction for the common people for it created the illusion of equality within the samgha and also a sense of relief that not only the poor but the rich also suffer

and ultimately die. But this did not inspire them to fight the injustices of the feudal system.

Everything will pass away–this was a philosophy of resignation and not of struggle. Sir Charles Eliot has put it very candidly thus: "The majority of intelligent men are prepared to devote their lives to the service of the British empire; the fact that it must pass away as certainly as the empire of Babylon and that they are labouring for what is impermanent does not disturb them and is hardly ever present to their minds" (*Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 204).

Buddha was born among the tribe of the Sakyas but his field of activity was the empires of Magadha and Kosala. Runaway slaves were not admitted into the samgha; women were admitted with great reluctance. This is a manifestation of the outlook of propertied classes and not of the grandeur of primitive communism. Buddha's method too is essentially metaphysical and is opposed to the dialectical method of many other Indian thinkers.

Rahul Sankrityayan makes the following comment on the relation between the teaching of Buddha and the interests of the merchants and the princes: "Buddha's philosophy holds up absolute momentariness. But he did not wish to apply this viewpoint to the economic system of society. It was natural that having established peace with the wealthy ruler-exploiters, the respect for such a brilliant philosopher as he should increase in the upper classes. Rich and influential brahmins like Sonadanda and Kootdanta of the priestly class became his followers: the princes seemed to be too anxious to show him all respect. The wealthy merchant class of those days loosened the purse-strings for honouring him... The truth is that more than princes, the merchants helped to spread the religion of Buddha. If Buddha had opposed the contemporary economic system, how could these facilities have been obtained then?" (*Baudha Darshan*, pp. 30-31.)

THE NATURE OF BUDDHIST ART

Mulk Raj Anand

As the works associated with the buddhist faith happened also to be some of the earliest authentic examples of Indian art, the term "buddhist art" cannot be used to designate a pure doctrinal tradition divorced from the main stream of other creative works of that time. Equally, it is difficult to understand this creative activity under the modern appellation "art", because the sources, both of technique and inspiration, of the works of this period are related to life concepts quite alien to presentday sensibility and experience. We have, in fact, to take ourselves back into an age which was completely different in mood and social climate from the contemporary machine civilisation.

It is likely that the theme, or the story element, in all its variegated anthropomorphic suggestions, was more important to the people of that time than the rendering of the themes which impresses us so intensely today. Therefore, while paying due attention to the particular forms and styles evolved in the buddhist periods, we must try to relate the works of that era back to the people who produced it.

Nature of Society

What was the character of society during those early centuries before Christ when buddhist works began to be produced?

The researches of Professor and Mrs Rhys Davids have more or less established for us the fact that the transition from the tribal society of ancient India to the unity of feeling and outlook of small nationalities had already taken place by the time when Asoka, the Maurya, came to the throne. The small, primitive republics of the villages of India, however, lasted from the Haryanka, Saisunaga and Nanda dynasties right through to the Mauryan empire, and later under the Sungas, who succeeded them in the north, and the Satavahanas, who inherited the culture-complex of buddhism south of the Rajaputana desert, to the Western Ghats, down to Andhradesa.

The brahmanical sutras and the buddhist birth stories, the Jatakas, reflect the substratum of this period and we find that already there was available among the communities of northern and central India advanced knowledge of the use of metals like tin, lead, silver, copper and iron. Also, these metals are known to have been used for various domestic and other purposes, probably from vedic times, but certainly throughout the Maurya and later periods.

The village republics were based on the cultivation of the soil, in a society where there was no "private property" in land in the later European sense, but only certain rights in land, that is to say, the right to till it in order to produce harvest sufficient for each family, and the right to graze cattle on the common land and to fetch fuel wood from the forests, free of all encumberment. It is likely that the customs of land tenure and the rights of individual householders varied slightly in the different communities in the various parts of India. But as the deeper layers of the population were composed of the indigenous Dravidian peoples, who had been settled in these regions for a long time, the pattern of social organisation was already a civilised one before the Aryans infiltrated into the group life of the Gangetic plains.

The amenities of an orderly existence were enjoyed in the village republics, almost independently of the happenings in

the capital, where the courts changed or remained constant, without exacting more than the customary revenue in kind, because of the nonpossession of any other rights by the king, except the right to collect enough produce to maintain the army for defence, to keep the roads and tracks in some kind of repair and to initiate public works.

Thus we find that buildings of wood and brick, sometimes of more than one storey, were widely constructed and abounded among the round and square huts of wood and bamboo of the outcastes on the fringes of the villages and even in small hamlets.

The division of labour, both within one caste and in relation to the other castes, was accepted, as much on the basis of caste as on the basis of skill in a particular profession. For instance, the herdsman was a professional with a high degree of awareness of his particular job: "Knowing the general appearance of each one of his charges and the marks upon it, skilled to remove flies' eggs from their hide and to make sores heal over, accustomed to keep a good fire going with smoke, to keep the gnats away, knowing where the fords are and the drinking places, clever in choosing pasture, leaving milk in the udders, and with a proper respect for the leaders of the herd."

Similarly, the artisans following the different crafts—of carpentry, smithy, leather-dressing, metal-work, painting, ivory carving and pottery—were an integral part of each organic village republic, being paid in kind for such services as they performed.

On account of the dependence of the community on the land, mother earth was regarded as a dread but beneficent divinity, to be appeased and worshipped, above all others. The continuance of the mother cult, in one form or another, from the prehistoric times into the later periods, seems to have given a basic continuity to this rural society and dictated the convention that no one could mortgage or sell his land. "No mortal must give me away", remained the primary injunction of the actual religion apart from all cults, and much of the creative imagination derives its concreteness and sense of reality from this basic affiliation with mother earth.

All the gods and goddesses, the tree spirits, the snake

spirits, as well as the fauns, dryads, nymphs and nereids, owe their formal characteristics to the feelings which the earth in its various moods stimulated among a highly sensitive people, living in close proximity to the forests and yet away from them, ushered continually into the new orders or disorders made possible by the change of monarchs in the capital. The gods of the Aryan pantheon took over the divinities of the more fertile Dravidian imagination or were replaced by them; and, though the conquerors had divided the people into four social grades, based on colour, varna, the subjugated people conquered their conquerors by humanising their beliefs and imagery.

City Culture

There was, from the distance between the villages and the capital, already a clear difference of cultural attitudes. While the villages, with their scattered huts made of bamboo and reed, continued to lead a homogeneous existence, based on folk needs related to agriculture and smallscale exchange of goods, within the narrowest proportions; the courts in the capital were evolving a higher and finer culture in consonance with the patronage afforded by the paramount rule and the all-encompassing sovereignty to which the kings aspired.

The kingdoms of the Haryanka, the Saisunaga and the Nanda dynasties, which preceded the Mauryan court, may not have been empires in the sense in which the Mauryas claimed to have made the India of their time, but the cultural patterns of these kingdoms were fairly complex and bore some resemblance to the Asiatic world. With the Mauryas, however, we find, from the descriptions of writers like Megasthenes, Arrian and Strabo, the emergence of an exalted style of living in cities, planned and executed with adequate regard to the needs of the emperor's majesty. The many-pillared hall built by Asoka in Pataliputra, the stupendous palace structures of which remains have been found, show that, beyond the people of the village republics, the emperor was possessed of the aims, ideas and motives of a great autocrat, like those of the monarchs who ruled in the sister Achaemenid empire.

In this context, then, it is possible to see two different

streams of creative development: on the one hand, there is the creative life of the peoples of the village republics, integral to the various layers of the tribal, primitive society with an agrarian outlook, of the earth, earthy; and, on the other hand, there is the thinner stream of themes and motives associated with palaces like that of Pataliputra, with its fantastic animal shapes, pelmettes, rosettes and bell-capitals, which were not only common elements of the craftsman's repertory under the various dynasties of India from the Haryanka downwards to the Mauryas, but part of the ancient east that extended from the Mediterranean to the Ganga valley.

New Synthesis

It was in some such a world that the Buddha had appeared in the sixth century BC.

As is well known, this young prince, descended from a small kingdom on the foothills of the Himalayas, realised the futility and the cruelty of the contrast between the lives of the kingly oligarchies and the people inhabiting the small hamlets. It was not so much the contrast between the plenty of the palace and the poverty of the village, but the cruelty of a rigid caste society in the already decadent hindu social organisation lorded over by the brahmins and kshatriyas that forced him to evolve his message of pity and love.

During his disquisitions with the learned hindu priests of Magadha, he seems to have arrived at a synthesis of the more plausible elements of hindu metaphysics, with his own need for simplification of the already highly intricate ritual ordained by the priestly order. He accepted the two fundamental truths, transmigration or renewed birth, earned as a kind of remuneration on consequence of karma, the fruits of deeds.

In the dominant hindu philosophy, as it existed before the time of the Buddha, all living beings die, only to be reborn in the form of other beings, superior or inferior according to the deeds committed in their previous lives. Man may be reborn as god or beast, according to his good or evil actions in his human existence.

The Buddha accepted this concept, but the difference between his view and that of the brahmins lies in the emphasis on the moral nature of his approach to deeds rather than the psychological or theological interpretations given by the brahmins. The hindus believed that the supreme god, iswara, can end the cycle of transmigration of the soul in its various physical coverings, in lieu of offerings, sacrifices, worship and the absorption of the individual soul into the universal spirit. The Buddha recognised neither creator nor organiser of the universe, neither personal soul nor universal spirit, but based the whole of his metaphysical edifice on the idea of deliverance.

Why, then, it may be asked, does man find himself in the cycle of birth and rebirth and how can he attain the condition of enlightenment, buddhahood, so that he may be released from sansara to attain nirvana?

The answers which the Buddha gave to these questions are summarised in the four holy truths: the existence of pain; the definition of the cause of pain; the suppression of this cause; the paths which lead to this suppression—the socalled noble eight-fold path.

The cause of all pain is the thirst for life. Therefore, to be delivered from the sorrows of the world, one must be delivered from the thirst of life. The reason why this is not possible is due to a collection of causes which are as follows: ignorance (avidya) produces the synthesis of concealed impressions or tendencies (sanskara); this synthesis produces cognition or the substance of thought (vijnana); cognition produces name and form (namarupa); and these in connection with the exterior world give rise to feelings, thirst and the like, which lead to all the evils. If these are renounced, then there arises a presentiment of nirvana, that is to say, of a kind of existence not subject to rebirth. The way to nirvana is made up of the eight-fold path: right belief in views; right resolve in aims; right words; right behaviour; right occupation or mode of livelihood; right effort or exertion; right contemplation or mindfulness; and right concentration in meditation and tranquillity.

Austere Teaching

The austerity of this way of salvation produced the urge for stark simplicity among the soft living degenerate hierarchies of hindu society. The commandments given were negative in the extreme: not to take life; not to steal; to refrain from unlawful sexual intercourse (for monks from all sexual intercourse); not to tell lies; not to drink intoxicating liquors; only to take food at certain specified times; not to take part in dancing, musical performances and similar pleasures; not to adorn the body with flowers, nor to use perfumes and unguents; not to sleep in any high or wide bed; not to possess gold or silver. But this hard path seems to have found favour, specially as the lower caste orders seem anyhow to have suffered from deprivations of the most extreme kind. And then, many of the others who suffered from the rigours of hindu society accepted this faith. And, in time, quite a few of the princes also began to pay lip service to the ideals of the Buddha.

The severity of the Buddha's injunctions, however, was somewhat modulated by the natural, instinctive love of life of those people who had accepted the doctrine of deliverance as an escape from social pressures. Therefore, in the centuries after the Buddha's death, the path seemed to offer the possibility of personal relations between man and man, which were more tender and essentially in keeping with the practical social forms of mutual aid practised in the village republics.

Thus it was that, in the wake of this moralistic teaching, there came a certain psychological understanding by the laity, if not by the monks, of the human need for worship of some symbols or images of the "enlightened one" which could offer solace to those for whom the comprehension of buddhist logic was an insuperable difficulty. Certain symbols, like the wheel, the tree of life and the lotus, which had been part of the imagery of the people from prehistoric times, through the aniconic and vedic periods, were resurrected and interpreted to symbolise the doctrine of the Buddha.

The beginning of early buddhist iconography go back, then, to the sources of the Indian imagination in its long history from Mohenjodaro downwards.

Tradition of Indian Art

It is necessary to study the continuity of this tradition briefly before we can understand the development of later buddhist art.

If there are any available links, which prove the continuity of the tradition from the earliest known art in India, in Mohenjodaro and Harappa, to the next known documents, then these are supplied by certain symbols which recur again and again in the later periods.

The pioneer critic of Indian art, Ananda Coomaraswamy, began, after his manifold researches in the history of ancient Indian art, to believe that the continuity was sustained through the role played by the original neolithic inhabitants of India, the Dravidians, in carrying on the styles of narrative art, in spite of the conquests and reconquests at the top, at first by the Aryan invaders and then by those successive waves of Greeks, Kushans and Huns, which came into India during the period before the Mauryas and after the beginning of the christian era.

In a study of the tree of life, the earth lotus, the world wheel, the lotus throne and the fiery pillar Coomaraswamy proves that these symbols existed throughout, through the aniconic period of the brahminical vedas, including the rigvedic period, long before their representation in buddhist iconography.

As some of these symbols were already present in the Mohenjodaro, Harappa culture, it seems fairly certain that a universal Indian symbolism was developing over a long time in the prehistoric periods.

In this context it must be emphasised that the known art of India does not spring up suddenly, but has its prototypes in wood and ivory long before the discovered monuments became available.

As most of these monuments seem to be inspired by the buddhist faith, and also constitute the beginning of the known art of India, they have a special significance for us in any consideration of our heritage, and in proving the continuity of our tradition.

The approximate date of the earliest finds seems to be uncertain, but is subsequent to the edicts of Asoka, the carvings which surmounted them have been disposed of as art of the classical style, imposed by a monarch of international affiliations and outlook on his empire. The inner tradition of buddhist Indian art reappears with a set of well-developed symbols in Barhut, Sanchi and other buddhist shrines.

There is extant a small gold repousse figure found in the mound at Laurya-Nandangarh, which is one of the objects discovered, under reliable circumstances of excavation, that can be certainly accepted as the work of the pre-Maurya period. Presumably it represents the earth goddess, prithvi, and she may be the divinity addressed in the burial in the Rigveda: "Go to thy mother, this earth, this widely extending, very gracious prithvi. That maiden soft as wool to the pious, may protect thee from the abode of destruction."

Of course, as I have suggested, the mother goddess was common to all the ancient eastern civilisations as well as those of the Mediterranean. But in the configuration shown here, she has antecedents in the terracotta figures of the Indus period, as well as in the adities of the Kushan and later periods. Undoubtedly, therefore, the evidence of the continuity of the iconographic tradition, beginning with the Indus valley civilisation, and its gradual development in the hands of Indian artisans of the later historical periods, becomes clearer.

This is not to say that there is not a historical interregnum between the Indus valley and the later ages, because the art of town-planning and stone-carving were certainly lost for centuries, but the persistence of traditional forms in the remains of the vedic and pre-Maurya periods is evidence of the creativeness of the indigenous peoples. The depth and vitality of the epic literature, and the essential source of its many myths and legends lies in crisis; and this shows the high level of awareness of the technique of writing, apart even from the profound and boldly searching metaphysical content.

May these forms have not been accompanied by a wealth of plastic art? Otherwise the fabulous city of Pataliputra would certainly not have been possible. Megasthenes, the Greek traveller, tells of five hundred and sixty towers and sixtyfour gate-

ways in the circuit of the city walls. Describing the wonders of Pataliputra, Aelian, borrowing from Megasthenes, says: "In the Indian royal palace... there are wonders with which neither Memnonian Susa in all its glory, nor Ecbatana with all its magnificence, can hope to vie. In the parks tame peacocks are kept, and pheasants which have been domesticated; and cultivated plants... and shady groves and pastures planted with trees, and tree-branches which the art of the woodman has deftly interwoven. There are also tanks of great beauty in which they keep fish of enormous size but quite tame."

Native Craft

This description finds parallels in certain relief sculptures of the Satavahana period at Sanchi, particularly in the panel on the eastern gateway representing the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu. The actual portal in the city walls is shown here with a simple torana, like the one constructed in stone at Sanchi, and the excavations at Pataliputra have revealed that it was surrounded by a massive palisade of teak beams, held together by iron dowels, making a girdle of fortifications of extraordinary craftsmanship and permanence. Again, the audience halls in Asoka's palace must have been of a magnificence equal to—if not more exalted than—that of the palaces of Xerxes and Darius.

The influence of the Achaemenids may have percolated into Pataliputra, but the craftsmanship in the capital, and more definitely of the habitation which the Emperor Asoka built for the ajivika sect of buddhists in the Barabar Hills, near Gaya, the most important of which is the Lomas-Rishi cave, is certainly the work of native hands. And, in spite of the borrowed ideas which went to the elaboration of Asoka's pillars, the workmanship in such a column is symptomatic of those fine qualities which had come to be associated with native craftsmen.

These indigenous elements do not, however, appear so pronouncedly in the classical art of the Asoka period as when they emerge in buddhist Barhut under the Sunga dynasty (185-72 BC) which began by being the contemporary of the Satavahanas in the Deccan, western and central India.

Among the remnants of the railings and gateways from Barhut, we can see imitations, in stone, of the wooden portals of early Indian towns, and also carved reliefs which are mainly decorations on the railings and fences. The yakshas and the yakshis (tree spirits) who appear here are pronouncedly Dravidian, but the nature spirits of the neolithic peoples were humanised by their incorporation into the buddhist faith, for, until then, the Dravidian spirits are of the earth, huge monoliths, evidencing to a concrete rural imagination, fertile but rooted in the actual sense of the vast landscapes. Later they are also absorbed by the most accomplished carvers into medallions with floral motifs and human figures, dramatically rendering the Jataka stories associated with the life of the Buddha.

These reliefs form part of a tradition of narrative art which is two-dimensional, and in which everything merges into everything else, without beginning without end, like the typical Indian ocean of story, in which all the anthropomorphic elements of Indian civilisation appear again, naive, but dynamic, "a world of no time and no place where anything can happen as in dreams".

These carvings adapted from the wood-carver's or the ivory-carver's technique go through to the early Sanchi stupas, erected under the Satavahanas, to the two marvellous reliefs in the vihara at Bhaja and other rock-cut reliefs of western India and the Deccan, and to the carving from the stupa at Jaggayyapeta near Amravati, on the Kistna, which is itself an equivalent of the sandstone panels of Satavahana Sanchi.

Underneath the upper layers of the court art of the imperial Mauryas, the Sungas and the Satavahanas, a feeling for plastic beauty is emergent for nearly a thousand years, which is reminiscent of the rich sensibility of the Indian people of that time, fertile and yet finely chiselled, almost the counterpart of the then prevailing Indian view of the universe as phenomena "replete with formless, fine matter, of which all living forms are concretions and transformations".

It is not possible to deal, exhaustively, with the prolific developments of the buddhist works over so long a span, with its manifold problems of style and influence, but let us demarcate

here, roughly, the various historical phases of buddhist art in India.

Early Buddhist Art

Firstly, there is the art of the ancient Indian schools mostly "primitive" hindu in character, surviving through integral forms in inner India, from before the time of the Buddha, subsisting as an inner folk rhythm, in spite of the alien Iranian, Greek and Roman influences exerted on the courts of the Maurya and Sunga emperors. This art percolated into the indigenous style of carving under the Satavahana dynasty which ruled for nearly three hundred years from the first century the whole peninsula from Andhradesa, through the Deccan and the Western Ghats to central India as far as what is now known as Bhopal. And it found expression in the rendering of a magnificent series of sculptures and paintings, in or around the stupas or monasteries carved out from Sanchi downwards through Bhoja, Karla, Bedsa, Kondane, Kanheri, Pitalkhora, Nasik to Ajanta and Amravati.

This period may be called early buddhist art.

As the creative tradition from which the craftsmen of this period derived their inspiration was already hundreds of years old in the hands of their ancestors among the Dravidian-Aryan populations of the prebuddhist eras, the formal technique evidenced in the oldest extant remains of the style at Barhut shows the transformation of carving from wood and ivory to stone. A lyrical linear rhythm flows through all the elements of the universe rendered with the chisel, connecting everything with everything else, in one continuous stream of life.

Even the more heroic sculptural forms are treated in this peculiar folk art, with its flowing rhythmic waves, a three-dimensional form in a two-dimensional, flat perspective, which is the very antithesis of the classical European schools. The Buddha in human form is mostly absent from these reliefs. Only his empty throne, surrounded by the worshippers is seen, except for symbols like the wheel, lotus or feet which often replace his figure. But the predominant theme is the previous incarna-

tions of the Buddha, narrated in consecutive rebirth (Jataka) scenes—which later began to be reproduced separately, because the stories and legends were all familiar and could be communicated easily to the laity.

Gandhara School

Secondly, the buddhist art of the Gandhara school, which originated in the northwest region near contemporary Peshawar towards the end of the first century after Christ, had, strictly, no direct relation with the indigenous tradition of Barhut and Sanchi, but borrowed its ideals from the Graeco-Roman classical art. It lasted until the end of AD fifth century and remained a unique mixture.

Unlike the indigenous ancient Indian school, the Gandhara art introduced the representation of the Buddha figure in human shape possibly as a deviative from the Indian tradition, but certainly in a novel form. The Greek god, Apollo, with the addition of a nimbus, seems to have been the prototype for the "enlightened one", the state of bodhisatva, that is to say before buddhahood, was often represented by the figure of an Indian prince adorned with the most elegant of ornaments. There are also a considerable number of bas-reliefs on the stupas and vihara cells, in which the figure of the Buddha and the saints are shown seated on a reverse lotus bloom, the base of which serves as a throne. The themes are mostly taken from the earthly life of the Buddha and not, as in ancient Indian art, from the Jatakas. The carved panels are separate and run from right to left; in the order in which circumambulation was enjoined to follow the sun's course—the building around which the circuit was made being kept on the right hand.

These sculptures and reliefs are noteworthy as illustration of an un-Indian style of treatment in the round, with the ideal of correctness in proportion to the human figure exalted above every other consideration. The resultant art, though sometimes charming for its foreignness, is mostly selfconscious and stiff for lack of an organic connection with the native consciousness.

Mathura School

Thirdly, the Mathura school which came to flourish under the patronage of the Kushan rulers of Gandhara is a break-away from the northwestern interlude into the realness of the indigenous sensibility. If there is an influence from Gandhara it is absorbed completely. And the carving arising from the chrysalis is, as it were, motivated by the inner spiritual ideals of central India and the kind of perspective which had been dominant in Mathura itself from long before the second century BC as a stylistic equivalent of the advanced school of Barhut.

The scholars are divided as to whether or not the human figure of the Buddha had already been carved in the workshops of Mathura before the Gandhara period. Certainly, the human figure of the Mathura school with its insistence on inner rhythm is the very opposite of the physical perfectionism sought for in Gandhara.

And the lush splendour of the sensuous yakshas and yakshis (tree spirits), as well as the bas-reliefs, evidences the same feeling as that which actuated the carvers of the myriad forms of the archaic period, when life was understood in terms of the most delicate flowerlike gestures of the dancers' hands, the swaying of hips and sinuous movements of figures involved in gay harvest festivals, aflame with the wildest impulses.

Fourthly, artistic influences travelled from Gandhara, as well as the iconography of the Buddha image and the Buddha legend, to Afghanistan, and thence to Turkestan. The styles which flourished in the Khyber pass, Begran, Hadda or Khotan, all reveal mixtures similar to Gandhara, of classical and Indian styles with a certain emphasis of each locality and the reigning taste. These may be considered the extensions of the Gandhara style. Even in Kashmir, at Harwan and Ushkar, the ideals remained unassimilable to the native Indian outlook. But all these episodes are fascinating mainly for the vitality of the buddhist faith rather than for their creative intensity.

Amravati

Fifthly, the tradition which the Satavahanas had taken from Sanchi and Barhut to the Western Ghats, and the Deccan, and which had flourished there roughly between 75 BC and 25 BC continued to flower from 25 BC to AD 320 in the stupa at Amravati at the mouth of the Kistna river and in the stupas and monasteries at Chantasale, Nagarjunakonda, Goli, Gummadidirun, and elsewhere. The same technique, which had obviously been transplanted from ivory carving in Barhut and Sanchi, reappears here on the railing and drums, hewn from green-white limestone, adumbrated with a wealth of feeling and imagery created by the transition through the teaching of the sage Nagarjuna, from hinayana to mahayana buddhism. The hallmark of this middle and later phase of the workmanship of Amravati is the intricacy of composition, sustained by the most sensitive rendering of forms, making these reliefs "the most voluptuous and the most delicate flower of Indian sculpture". Apart from the Amravati medallions, representing the Jataka stories, isolated Buddha images were carved at Nagarjunakonda and other shrines. There may have been some influence from the commerce between the Roman and the Andhra empires, and the style of Amravati certainly extended to Ceylon, Indochina and the Celebes.

Gupta Renaissance

In AD 320 a kshatriya sovereign, Chandragupta was crowned "king of kings" at Pataliputra in Magadha, after he had conquered the bulk of northern India, from Orissa to Ujjain. In about the fifth century, the white Huns overran the northwestern and Gandhara part of the Gupta empire, but were beaten back by Harsha of Kanauj (AD 606-47); and this king may be said to have continued the Gupta tradition of patronage of the arts. The southern peninsula was ruled by independent dynasties such as the Pallavas and Chalukyas, who divided the domains of the Andhras. But this whole period of the efflorescence of the arts bears the stamp of the Guptas. Politically renascent, this age saw the culmination of the first dynamic

thousand years of Indian culture, the development of all those strains in architecture, sculpture, painting, literature and drama which were latent in the earlier centuries, and which now attained perfection in their techniques equalled but rarely surpassed in the succeeding centuries.

This was the age when the style of the early elemental rock-cut chaitya halls of Bhaja and Karla developed into the rich splendour of cave XIX at Ajanta, intricately carved and embellished with sculpture. The paintings of this era, at Ajanta, Bagh, Badami and Siltanavasal, have been summed up in their masterly use of colour and compositions as the art of "great courts charming the mind by their noble routine". And now, free-standing chaityas also began to be built as at Sanchi, Aihole, Ter, Deogarh, Bitargaon and Bhumare. The allied art of sculpture gathers up the lessons of the styles which had gone before and achieves a finesse, delicacy and poise, beyond all its antecedents. From the Buddha images, carved in the studios of Mathura under the Guptas, to those shaped in places as far apart as Sarnath, Amravati, Gandhara and Karla, there is evident "the quality", as the Vishnudharmottaram calls it, "of breathing stone". And it was this tradition, matured in what is called the classical Gupta renaissance, which travelled to Siam, Cambodia, Barabadur in Java, and into China, Korea and Japan.

Buddhist Survivals

Seventhly, the survivals of buddhism in eastern India between the seventh and the twelfth centuries produced in the university of Nalanda, and under Palasena dynasties in Bengal (AD 730-1197). a medieval buddhist art, which was to be the last spell of this great tradition in the country of its origin.

The architectural forms are continuations of the Gupta styles. The sculptures, carved in hard, black stone are finely chiselled and somewhat more elegant than their prototypes, especially the many bronze images that were then made for pilgrims to take away as tokens from the workshop near the sacred shrines. The tantric or magical interpretations of buddhism, which emerged about this time, under the influence of

hindu concepts, affected the buddhist art of the medieval period.

The buddhist art of Nepal and Tibet is a prolongation into the fastnesses of the Himalayas, of this last phase of Buddha, the upper Indian tradition in Bengal.

According to legend, the Buddha himself had visited Nepal. And though that is unlikely, the piety of Asoka may have contributed monuments which affected the local styles. The Nepalese pantheon symbolises the Buddha as prajapati, or universal man, purusa or world axis, his eyes fixed on the summit of the skydome. And the various temples are raised on stone pyramids in five stages, with sloping roofs, held up by wooden brackets.

In Tibet the Palasena stream met the Chinese traditions. In AD 630, the first king of Tibet married a Nepalese princess, and, a little later, the daughter of the Chinese emperor, T'ai Tsung. This union seems symbolic of Tibetan civilisation, which is the joint product of Tibetan buddhist magical and animistic beliefs and the tantric buddhism that came from Kafiristan in the eighth century and from eastern India. The Tibetan stupa is a bulbous dome placed on one or more square bases. Like the Nepalese prototype, it is surmounted by a square harmika, and a mast uplifting a tier of telescoped umbrellas, topped by a flame finial. The paintings of Tibet included an enlarged iconography of the buddhas, bodhisattvas and taras, as well as local saints and heroes. The themes of Tibetan art, however, are subdued to traditional forms integral to a conservative society.

Folk Roots

If it is asked how such a long, vital tradition of buddhist art became possible, I would suggest that the secret of this fertility *lies in the essential creativeness of the peoples of India in those early ages when the struggle to master the vast landscapes of this earth was at its intensest.*

It is likely that the dumb neutrality of the landscape, with its seemingly unconquerable proportions, and the meagre social organisations of the tribal, primitive and emerging nationalities, dictated at the end of the vedic and upanishadic period an almost neutralist metaphysics, such as buddhism certainly was in its original formulations. But the dynamic behind this philo-

sophy was supplied by the restless and abundant energies of the local populations, in search of new forms and images with which to establish their control over the phenomena which surrounded them.

In this sense, then, the vitality of buddhist art springs from the pooled resources of the laity and not from the impositions of the monks or the upper orders.

And, from this point of view, the arbitrary European distinction between the "classical" and the "folk" arts breaks down in its application to the arts of our country. In India the socalled "classical" books, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, have been sung by the masses, and, though the giant pillar edicts, and other creations of the Mauryan empire, owed themselves to the Hellenistic and Achaemenid preferences of Asoka, there were folk elements even in these "classical" works. (Perhaps what seems to many contemporary European scholars to be the higher excellence of the values and forms even of the "classical" art of Greece and Rome, as against the later "romantic nonsense", may actually be the excellence of an art which was not intended to be "classical", that is to say, inspired by the genius for order of an upper class of priests or lords. But it may have been, in fact, mostly the excellence of an art created by, and shared with, the populace.) Certainly Indian art, after the disappearance of the Maurya order, and in the emergence of the linear and folk rhymes in the Sunga dynasty, at Barhut and Sanchi, shows the predominance of folk feeling.

At any rate, as is obvious from the social constitution of those periods, suggested in this article, the participation of the people, in building up the symbols, the viharas and the monasteries, associated with it, is real. And though the works may be religious in content, and even accord with a canon, the delight in workmanship dominates the artisan and the understanding of life, imbued with secular habit, is passed on from generation to generation.

Undoubtedly, the impulse of dedication may take its example from the conversion to the faith of an upper order, constituted by the local raja or his courtiers, and from the shopkeepers, as is evident from the series of sculptures and rock-cut temples carved out under the Satavahanas from the Deccan to

central India. But, as the king, or the nobleman, did not own the land as his private property, and had only certain rights in land, that is to say, he collected revenue in lieu of the defence he provided or the canals and tracks he kept in good repair, he was socially and not intrinsically superior to the villagers, who also had adequate rights in land, and on the grazing ground and forest land around the little village republics. The division of labour tended to determine the caste system. And in this set up the craftsmen, or the shilpis, were common people, whose excellence resided in their skill: "One who knows his craft amiss... after his death will fall into hell and suffer" (*Mayamataya*).

Such an attitude is, of course, inevitable when the identification of the artist with the image arises from belief. The traditional artisan, or craftsman, was more sincerely expressive, because he was not constrained to demonstrate his superficial personality, being himself an integral part of the social organism. And in so far as he made himself what he was, he expressed himself by devotion to the work to be done. And he achieved, even when themes were given a style which is often individual and yet, at the same time, certainly speaks the language of his time.

There were many changes in the attitude towards creative works in the later history of India during which the emphasis on religion brought the subservience of the craftsmen to the doctrinaire thesis of the codes laid down by the priestcraft. Inevitably, there were, therefore, periods of decadence in the arts, though the psychology of ritualistic worship was throughout well understood by the clergy and the need to gather mass support for a particular faith kept the dogmas at bay, making for concreteness of imagery even where the truths of religion to be illustrated were abstract.

The trends of buddhist art, mentioned above, thus display a power which is symptomatic, not only of the simpler needs of the men of the then new faith of buddhism, but indicates their kinship with an earlier indigenous tradition of folk painting in the flat, by absorption, perhaps, of the three-dimensional technique that came, from outside, into the Maurya court art—

a compromise which is more like a fusion with the original hypothesis under the alien influence.

This view of mine is confirmed by Professor Nihar Ranjan Ray when he says of the early artists of Barhut

"For instance, when they show, in entirety, figures and objects that ought optically to have been presented hidden or partly covered or when they present an object in small or large proportions, not as they optically appear to us but in accordance with the meaning of the relation into which they enter with other figures of the story, or when they tilt the relief to show objects in entirety, or extend the volume of an object, or its part, not into depth but on the surface they follow essentially the method of the primitive folk tradition of India that has come down to our present day in the shape and form of 'patachitras'"

Timeless Art

The timelessness which is reflected in this attitude may also be the result of those processes of creation and dissolution which must have seemed endless to our ancestors inured to the routine of an agrarian economy, in which everything seemed to repeat itself between the past and the future Time, then, was perhaps reflected only in the notion of the vast spaces In between, through the gaps in the social order, the imagination seemed to go on without ever coming to an end, connecting one thing with another and everything to everything else as the only way in which the individual could find a place in the human complex

Meanwhile, the search for an idiom is continuous, arising from the impetus of life itself, or an overabundance of it necessary to the urges for a higher social organism

For instance, the emergence of men and women as part of the process of nature, in the Sunga art, after the absence of the human figure in the more abstract, orderly and exalted design of Maurya times, emphasises the reversion toward popular feeling of the native tradition and its push forward into a new period of creative living according to the humanist buddhist faith.

It is not intended to promote any prejudices here against foreign incursions. But, reaffirming one's faith in the composite nature of India's artistic heritage, I wish, at the same time, to suggest that the basic residuum of the native Indian tradition had already evolved a rich storehouse of vital, concrete, anthropomorphic imagery in wood, if not in stone, through the potent Dravidian mother sources of energy, in which tree spirits and snakes, creepers and human beings all mingle together in a linear rhythm; and this residuum was affected to an extent, or began to run parallel with "the other trend", noticed by Dr Stella Kramrisch, that of the schematic manner of vertical and horizontal lines and three-dimensional extensiveness illustrated in the socalled Ajatasatru Pillar showing the miracle of Sravasti, the preaching of abhidharma in the tushita heaven, and the Buddha's descent, in Sanchi stupa No. 1.

The fusion of the two strains, the fertile and exuberant native tradition of myriads of imaginative forms and the rhythmic logic and balance of the incoming Nordics brought about that high level of craftsmanship which already characterises the dramatic buddhist art, from the earliest panels of Barhut and Sanchi, through the reliefs and sculptures of Bhaja, Karla, Bedsa, Kondana and Ajanta to Nagarjunakonda and Amravati, as well as the Gupta and post-Gupta sculpture.

The inexhaustible onrush of multitudinous forms that began here travelled in many directions, illustrating the vitality and richness, as well as the grace and tenderness, of a tradition which is one of the greatest in the history of world art.

LOW PRICE PUBLICATION SERIES

The PPH is glad to announce a new scheme of producing essential reading matter on questions of great interest to people—economics, politics, science and technology, history of revolutionary movement and short biographies of outstanding freedom fighters belonging to the progressive movement.

The publications in this series will be priced at the lowest possible level, so that everyone will find it within his reach. The prohibitive cost of production, distribution and sale has been responsible for putting up the sale price of books very high.

There has been legitimate clamour for more books and at cheaper prices. In order to meet this legitimate demand the PPH has undertaken this venture of supplying wholesome reading matter at cheap prices.

The PPH hopes that with the firm support of our readers we can make a success of this scheme.

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA—A Short Biography, the first volume in the LPPS, is already out.

SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA

A Short Biography

By Panchanan Saha

Demy 8 vo **pp. 104+12** **Rs. 2 50**

Shapurji Saklatvala belonged to that generation of our country, progressive and highly patriotic, which would not rest until India was free and Indians were in a condition to better their lot. He started as a social worker, then plumped for industrialisation, soon got disillusioned with the benefits of capitalism, wandered into liberal, labour and socialist politics, participated in the foundation of the Communist Party of Great British and remained true to the cause of communism to the day of his death in 1936.

Saklatvala was unflinching in his fight against imperialism and was virtually exiled to Britain. His visit to India in 1927 and his open letters to Gandhiji constituted a historic confrontation. After this the authorities cancelled his passport and he was not allowed to enter his motherland again. Nevertheless, he carried on the struggle for India's independence from across the ocean and in the very den of the British lion.

Twice elected to the British Parliament by the workers of North Battersea he was a stout patriot, a great internationalist, a staunch communist, a great friend of the Soviet Union in the early days.

Official antipathy and general indifference have tended to obscure the bright memory of this great freedom fighter who in most difficult conditions won the admiration of progressive people both in India and England. We hope this small publication will be the prelude for more fuller work on the life and work of Saklatvala.

Some PPH Books

Leo Huberman

MAN'S WORLDLY GOODS

The Story of the Wealth of Nations

Rs. 10.50

Anirudha Gupta

REPORTING AFRICA

Rs. 25.00

S. A. Shah

STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A Political Economy of India

Rs. 15.00

Manmathnath Gupta

THEY LIVED DANGEROUSLY

Rs. 25.00

Dr R. K. Parmu

A HISTORY OF MUSLIM RULE IN KASHMIR, 1320-1819

[illegible]0.00

PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE